"Between Rage and Love": Disidentifications Among Racialized, Ethnicized, and Colonized Allosexual Activists in Montreal

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ABSTRACT

"Between Rage and Love": Disidentifications Among Racialized, Ethnicized, and Colonized Allosexual Activists in Montreal

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This dissertation is an interdisciplinary analysis of activists in contemporary Montreal whose bodies are marked by the intersections of sexuality, race, ethnicity, colonization, gender, and class. I apply José Esteban Muñoz's theory of disidentification, as read through Giorgio Agamben's conceptualization of "whatever being," to life story interviews collected from eight activists as well as to my own life narrative in order to interrogate and explore our construction of singular spaces—disidentificatory spaces—for ourselves. Within these spaces, we discover meaningful ways to belong without subjecting ourselves to the discursive demands of identification or non-identification. By focusing my study on three institutional aspects of our lives—family, citizenship, and activism—I show how our histories provide us with citations that disrupt the dominant narratives that aim to structure our lives in increasingly invasive, oppressive, and violent ways. In this respect, Montreal is an intriguing site for such disruptions to take place: a multicultural city in the North/West built on colonized land wherein sexual rights and freedoms commingle with language and nationalist politics to become a constant source of tension among its denizens. Thus, I argue that an expression of affect and emotion produced within a disidentifactory space is vital for minoritized subjects to negotiate this messiness, for disidentification itself is a messy process. I conclude by demonstrating that engaging with this messy process is necessary to the production of new forms of sociality, laying the path to a hopeful future that Muñoz calls "queer utopia."

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List of Acronyms

CQGL…….Conseil québécois des gais et lesbiennes

GLAM……LGBTQ Asians of Montreal (formerly Gay & Lesbian Asians of Montreal)

LGBTQ……..Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual/Transgender, Queer

LHE……Living Histories Ensemble

QAIA……..Queers Against Israeli Apartheid

QPOC…….Queer People of Colour

REC……Racialized, Ethnicized, and Colonized

Chapter One

Introduction: Belonging, With a Difference

Anecdotes are the lifeblood of the community.

Yasmin Jiwani (personal conversation)

What the map cuts up, the story cuts across.

Michel de Certeau (1984, p. 129)

Montreal is in my blood. My family's presence in this city dates back three generations, when both my paternal grandmother's father and my maternal grandfather's father left their respective villages in Toisan,[1] one of the poorest areas in China at the time, to make what was surely a treacherous journey across the vast waters of the Pacific and the varied landscapes of Canada to arrive at their ultimate destination, Montreal. Although I was born in the heart of the Ottawa Valley, I view this as something of a temporal fluke; if my mother had waited a mere month longer before moving from Montreal to join my father in the tiny town of Deep River, Ontario, then I would be calling the former, rather than the latter, my place of birth.

While I spent many a vacation in Montreal as a child, it was not until I attended McGill—the larger of the city's two Anglophone universities—for my undergraduate studies that I was able to gain a sense of what it was like to live here over a sustained

[1] Also known as Taishan in Mandarin, this area is part of region in China called Szeyap. The dialect, Toisanese, is a "sub-variety of Cantonese" (Leung, 2010, p. 38).

period of time. In short, I was hooked. I steeped myself in the romanticism of Montreal life, passing time chatting with friends in cafés both tony and grungy, perusing through many a novel (for my courses, naturally) while lounging under the autumnal afternoon sun on the grassy hillside of Mount Royal, or strolling through one of the city’s many quaint neighbourhoods.

Not all of my time was occupied with such leisurely pursuits, however; I was engaged in numerous extracurricular activities, as well, including directing and stage managing plays, writing and editing for one of McGill’s student literary magazines, and serving as a literature representative with the English Students Association. I also attended weekly meetings of a “coming out” group, for it was during this period when I finally accepted the fact that I was gay. And, almost concurrently, I developed an acute awareness of my race and ethnicity as a determinant of who I was both internally and externally. In the ensuing years, these aspects of my identity would come to play prominent roles in my life, as self-reflection led to edification, which evolved into politicization, and then transformed into activism.

After completing my B.A., I spent the next decade drifting back and forth between Mississauga, Ontario, and Fredericton, New Brunswick, for graduate school, work, and non-work. During this time, I became a dedicated activist both on campus (the University of New Brunswick) and in the community (Fredericton and Toronto), throwing myself into issues and causes ranging from anti-homophobia and anti-racism campaigns to community radio work. Eventually, though, the allure of Montreal life proved too strong to resist, and so almost a decade after my previous departure, I found myself back in the city as one of its denizens. After devoting so much time and energy to

political organizing prior to my return, however, I convinced myself that I had had enough of that life and, thus, made the decision to focus my attention solely on carving out a comfortable existence for myself in the city, thereby leaving my activist days behind. Yet, as those who have ever immersed themselves in such activities undoubtedly know, making such a statement is always followed by "Famous last words." As one who had been multiply minoritized due to my race, sexuality, and psyche, I found it very difficult to ignore the racist and heterosexist as well as misogynist, classist, ableist, colonialist, and imperialist behaviour, actions, and language I was witnessing around me locally, nationally, and globally. Consequently, I found myself drawn back into the world of socio-political activism soon after setting foot back in Montreal.

Within a short amount of time, however, it became apparent to me that I faced some serious challenges; in particular, I experienced what I can only describe as a crisis of identity. *How should I position myself?* I wondered. I was Chinese and, hence, Asian, yet I had problems relating to many members of GLAM,[2] an organization I had led for five years, as a number of them were immigrants, while others were born and raised in Montreal or other parts of Quebec, thus rendering their experiences and conceptualizations of Chinese-ness and Asian-ness, not to mention Canadian-ness, very different from my own. My race and ethnicity automatically made me feel out of place in the mainstream allosexual[3] community, while my sexuality and my weak Chinese

[2] "GLAM" was originally an acronym for Gay and Lesbian Asians of Montreal; however, due to the lack of inclusivity inherent in the expanded version of the name, we as a group decided to make a conscious effort to refer to the organization simply as GLAM and provide a detailed explanation that addressed the panoply of sexualities represented in the group to anyone who asked about the name.

[3] "Allosexual" is an Anglicization of the Québécois term "allosexuel," which itself was coined as a

language skills estranged me from much of the Sino-Montreal community. And despite my family's century-long presence in the city, my birth in small-town Eastern Ontario and my upbringing there and in suburban Southern Ontario ensured that I would always be viewed as an outsider in a city and province in which belonging is perpetually the source of charged and, often, hostile debate. Consequently, these instances of precarity—of synchronously belonging and not-belonging, of being fragmented and dispersed, yet also unified and coherent—sparked within me a desire to explore in more depth the ways in which people like me—racialized, ethnicized, and colonized (REC)[4]

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francophone response to the English term "queer," though the translation is not quite as tidy as one might expect. "Allosexuel" refers collectively to "*des personnes homosexuelles, lesbiennes, bisexuelles et transgenres*" (it may also function as an adjective) (Office québécois de la langue française). While "queer" has also been used similarly as an umbrella term for non-heterosexual orientations and identities, among activist and academic circles in the Montreal Anglophone community, it is contextualized more as "[a] political statement, as well as a sexual orientation, which advocates breaking binary. [*sic*] thinking by recognizing both sexual orientation and gender identity as potentially fluid" (UC Berkeley Gender Equity Resource Center). Thus, I use "allosexual" as both an umbrella term as well as in the same spirit as "queer" as well as to recognize the specific local context in which my research was conducted. I have also anglicized the term to disrupt the linguistic boundaries surrounding it, though it should be noted that "allosexual" has also been used as a term by sexual behaviour researchers to describe "the occurrence of genital stimulation, intercourse, or sex" between any two individuals of any sex or gender, as opposed to "autosexual" or "asexual" behaviour (Burleson, Trevathan, & Gregory, 2002, p. 494). Occasionally I may use "gay and lesbian" to highlight the hegemonic structures that privilege gay and lesbian voices above all others in Montreal, and "queer" where participants may identify themselves as such or when I am referring specifically to queer theory.

[4] Ethnicized" and "colonized" are employed here in the same sense as "racialized," given that

allosexual activists in Montreal—have been able to navigate, negotiate, and live their respective senses of self in emotionally healthy and productive ways while still managing to contribute their time and energy to important social, political, and economic justice work. That desire has now taken the material form of this dissertation.

In the chapters that follow, I will be providing an analysis of life story interviews that I conducted with Montreal-area REC allosexual activists as well as of events from my own life. This analysis has been divided according to three distinct, yet inter-related socio-political, cultural, and economic institutions that figure prominently in our lives: family; citizenship; and activism. In scrutinizing our perceptions of and attitudes towards these institutions as well as their impact on our day-to-day existences, I have come to realize that we enact unique ways of being that neither fully claim nor fully reject identification with particular identities to which hegemonic social forces attempt to fix us. Indeed, it is through the performative practice of *disidentification* that we, as REC allosexual activists, create spaces for ourselves in which we have been able to survive and thrive not only in terms of our community involvement, but in our quotidian lives, as well. Such a practice relies on a constant shifting of the contact points at which various identity markers intersect so that new axes are constantly emerging, resulting in a process of identity formation that is always ongoing in its transformation, defying

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"racialization refers to the process whereby groups are marked on the basis of some kind of real or putative difference" (Jiwani, 2006, p. 6). Thus, ethnicization and colonization suggest similar processes that actively impose certain putatively identificatory qualities on individuals that differentiate them from majoritarian populations based on ethnicity in the former case and aboriginality in the latter instance. This is not to suggest, however, that such marked individuals are not engaged in their own processes of resistance and decolonization.

fixity and essentialization as well as expectation.

While looking toward the future, we, in performing our disidentifications, also reach into the past, “citing” through memory critical and vital events, actions, ideas, and people in history that inform our present without defining it. In this sense, emotion and affect are key, for it is in the moments of feeling—feeling hope, melancholy, happiness, rage, love—that the materiality of our lives crystallizes in ways that become knowable to us. Moreover, emotion and affect are the means by which coalition building is made possible, for they make visible the openings in the barriers that separate us from each other, allowing us to find the sites of access where we can connect as well as share and exchange knowledge in all its forms.

Disidentification, then, is actually more than a way of being; it is also a kind of praxis, in that it operationalizes a kind of sociality that takes into account and appreciates the singularity of experience without authenticating it, while at the same time constructing a sense of community that never fully coheres into a monolithic entity, yet has the capacity to act as an indispensable system of support when the occasion arises. Intersectionally performative, disidentification also enables the REC allosexual subject to see the world kaleidoscopically, in its many patterns, colours, and facets, so that he, she, or They[5] gains analytical insight into complex social systems and, hence, can develop tactics that can address certain difficult problems in a more efficacious way

[5] Many transgender, genderqueer, and queer individuals prefer to be referred by the pronoun “they,” but used in a singular sense; my use of it here is therefore an acknowledgement of that desire, spelled here with an upper-case “T” (i.e., “They,” as well as the possessive “Their” and objective “Them”) in order to distinguish it from the original third-person plural usage of “they.”

than perhaps those without such a intersectional perspective.

In Chapter Two, I will elaborate on the theoretical constructs that undergird my analysis; in particular, I will define and describe in more detail the terms "intersectionality," "performativity," and "disidentification," as well as introduce some of the philosophical thinking on affect and emotion, demonstrating the links between them that provide the foundation for the chapters that follow. Chapter Three will focus on methodology; that is, I will give an overview of the literature on life story and oral history interviewing, paying special attention to some of the challenges I encountered in interviewing individuals who were often more than mere acquaintances to me. The next three chapters then address the content of the narratives themselves. Chapter Four will look at the impact of my narrators' intersectional identities on their respective upbringings and family life, which ultimately influenced the way that they view the very notion of family today. Specifically, I will show how they disidentify with the Northern/Western construction of the nuclear family, which has not only been the dominant intimate social structure in heterosexual life, but has become so in gay and lesbian life, as well. Chapter Five is divided into two parts: Part A dissects the processes by which certain notions of citizenship have been normative in Northern/Western society, paying specific attention to the myths surrounding territory, law, and peoplehood that define belonging in places such as Montreal; Part B focuses primarily on my narrators' stories around citizenship, highlighting the singular ways that they live their senses of belonging by disidentifying with the myths that endeavour to exclude and oppress them. The final analytical chapter centers on the narrators' various activisms, which are driven and sustained by different strands of emotion. In discussing their paths

through all of these institutions—family, citizenship, and activism—the narrators illuminate the processes of disidentification with which they engage in order to survive, mobilize, thrive, and strive for a better tomorrow. Thus, in the Conclusion, I revisit the narratives one final time as a means of sharing the narrators’ visions of a utopian future.

This dissertation is intended to help add to the growing body of scholarly research on REC allosexual lives in Canada, which is still in its nascent stages when compared to that of the United States, where a “canon” of such work has already been established. This canon includes many of the thinkers whose writings not only have inspired and influenced me during the writing of this tome, but also have been cited at length throughout its pages—thinkers such as Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, David L. Eng, José Esteban Muñoz, Cherríe Moraga, and Barbara Smith, to name several. Here in Canada, we have a few well-established and esteemed scholars of our own, of course, including Makeda Silvera, Richard Fung, Dionne Brand, and Rinaldo Walcott. Hopefully, over time, we will witness a significant expansion of that list so that we may have a scholarly body of activist knowledge that we can call our own.

Chapter Two

Performing Belonging: Towards a Disidentificatory Space

> *She believed that when we died we really didn't die. We traveled toward the stars to be with our people. Yet some needed to return to Earth to learn more. As life was getting ready to be formed during conception and the spiritual entity entered into the child, usually it was a female spirit that entered a female child, and a male spirit that entered a male child. Some of us were so excited to get back to our people that we didn't look at which body we entered into and didn't realize until later.*
>
> Raven E. Heavy Runner (2001, p. 131)

> *In this chain and continuum, I am but one link. The story is me, neither me nor mine. It does not really belong to me, and while I feel greatly responsible for it, I also enjoy the irresponsibility of the pleasure obtained through the process of transferring. Pleasure in the copy, pleasure in the reproduction. No repetition can ever be identical, but my story carries with it their stories, their history, and our story repeats itself endlessly despite our persistence in denying it.*
>
> Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989, p. 122)

When I was 16, I suffered a small nervous breakdown. I had been struggling with my sexuality since I was 12, my secret bubbling inside me, building up pressure like soda in a bottle shaken vigorously, but unreleased. Severe bouts of depression had also begun to infect my mind in my teen years, and they joined forces with my closeted demons to make my life a living hell. What triggered my breakdown was a simple request from my father to tidy up the family room, underscored by his rather irritated tone. There was no logic to my reaction; I was entering the shower just as he made this request, and within ten minutes of standing there, letting the hot water wash over me, my self-worth started to crumble. I quickly exited the bathroom, at which point my father made the same request again, this time as a demand. Suddenly, I could not contain my emotions any longer. I ran upstairs to my room and shut the door, threw myself on my bed, and sobbed uncontrollably, violently. I had never cried like this before; it was as if I was having a seizure, my body convulsing, my mind flooding with thoughts about everything that was wrong with me. I tried to stop myself, but it was futile; any effort to wipe my mind blank was met with another barrage of toxic thoughts.

About ten minutes after I had plunged into this darkness, I heard my father's angry voice downstairs, calling my name, then his footsteps as he ascended the stairs.

When he opened the door to my room, I could sense he was taken aback by what he saw. My face was buried in my pillow, so I could not see him, but I could feel his reaction in the energy of the room. He asked me what was wrong, his tone softer, concerned. I continued weeping, unable to speak. I was too terrified to tell him anything; none of it made sense to me, so how could I articulate it? He sat down in a chair across from my bed and for the next 20 minutes tried to draw out from me whatever it was I found so upsetting. I could hear the fear in his voice; this was a crisis he did not know how to handle. I remained, however, too incapacitated to oblige him in his entreaties. Finally, after several minutes of silence from him, he quietly told me a story.

The story was about his relationship with his father, my yieh yieh, who passed away almost a decade before my birth. My father recounted how, during the late 1950s while living in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, he and my grandfather would get into heated arguments over the children he and my mother were producing. My father, as the second of three brothers and five siblings overall, was expected to have male children to help continue the family's lineage, as any good Confucian was supposed to do. However, my parents kept having daughters: first my oldest sister, then my second, then my third. Meanwhile, my father's older brother and his wife managed to produce the son that my grandfather so coveted. This, my father told me, spurred yieh yieh to mock my father openly for having so many girls. The taunting was relentless, and continued through the family's move to Montreal in the early 1960s. My father would react angrily to yieh yieh's verbal assaults, and the confrontations were often explosive. During one of these exchanges, my grandfather had a massive heart attack; after a week of convalescence, he died.

I was not sure why my father decided to tell me this story at that moment. Was he comparing the breakdown I was having in front of him now to that event from the past? Was he suggesting that I, in behaving this way, would cause him to suffer the same fate as yieh yieh? Or was he trying to imply that I was the "treasured son," and thus, should know and appreciate my own value? He never explained, nor did I ask him. I was too afraid to know the answer. All of the reasons that swirled around my mind carried with them the weight of enormous responsibility—responsibility that would be transferred onto my shoulders and burden me with all the expectations that came with it. This was the first time I understood the immensity of the role that history played in my life. The "sins" of the father, as it were, visited upon the son.

* * *

History has a knack for inserting itself into our lives in unpredictable ways. It can come to us through stories that stretch across generations, passing down instructions from our ancestors that we feel compelled to heed lest we risk their voices dissipating into the ether, lost forever. It can emerge from a memory that inhabits the edges of our psyche, waiting to be drawn out by a sensory experience and released into the world to bring us

peace or chaos or both. It can arrive with the force of a hurricane, sweeping us up in a collective past defined by events both small and grand, horrific and inspirational, insignificant and meaningful, and depositing us on the street, unsure of what we are supposed to do next. We are always at the mercy of history; and what it does with us, we can never foretell or control.

“Memories are living histories,” proclaim Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (2006, p. ix). They breathe inside us, sometimes giving us direction in our lives, sometimes holding us back, sometimes empowering us, sometimes demoralizing us. Always we carry them with us, and always they are affective. How we respond to them differs from person to person, from memory to memory. For Alex Haley (1973/2006), who as a child overheard stories his grandmother and aunts told of an ancestor named Kinte who was brought to the U.S. from Africa as a slave generations earlier, it meant traveling to Gambia to explore his family’s origins and discovering Kinte’s tribe, which accepted Haley as one of its own. For British writer Carolyn Kay Steedman (1986/2003), who grew up in a working-class, single-parent household in 1950s London, it meant working through her relationship with her mother by writing a book that examined her classed and gendered upbringing. And for Martha Norkunas (2002), who grew up in a multi-ethnic, working-class neighbourhood of Lowell, Massachusetts, it meant seeing her Irish-Lithuanian family and her community in a different light as she researched her hometown’s monuments. A memory can be like the brightest star in the night’s sky; we can use it to guide us when we are lost in the dark, but we do not always know where it is taking us until we arrive at our destination.

Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989) believes that “[e]very gesture, every word involves our

past, present, and future. The body never stops accumulating” (p. 122-123). We fill ourselves up with stories that become memories, and memories that become stories. These memory-stories may hold significance for us, but they can also branch out into realms beyond our parochial interests, creating what Annette Kuhn (2002) refers to as “an extended network of meanings” that coheres other facets of the world around us, be they cultural, political, social, or economic, among other elements that shape our lives (p. 5). Engaging in the “meaning-making” (Dhamoon, 2009) exercise of “memory work” (Kuhn, 2002) enables us to use these stories as a means of seeking out and making visible the links between, for example, our family life, our sense of belonging in society, and both individual and collective memory (p. 5). In this sense, memory work can be likened to assembling the pieces of giant puzzle—the form of which, however, is not static, but constantly shifting and evolving as new fragments are introduced and others removed, producing different impressions in perpetuity. Unlike many common investigative methods, however, memory work is not empirical; there are no real “facts” or “truths” in the objective sense. Memory work is about the truths of the *memory makers* themselves, not those who claim status as observers. In this sense, memory work can be empowering for marginalized subjects, for whom there is the potential of activating a Freirean (1970/2007) *conscientização*, or critical consciousness, occasioning “the development of a critical and questioning attitude towards their own lives and the lives of those around them” (Kuhn, 2002, p. 9). In this moment of “conscientization,” we claim ownership of our memories, our stories, our histories, our truths.

And yet in so doing, we who live in a state of alterity often find that in certain areas of our existence, our stories will not be taken seriously, which can be to our

detriment. Perhaps one reason for such disregard is the devaluation of orality and oral storytelling traditions over time. According to Walter J. Ong (1982/2012), narrative is one mechanism that has long been employed by human beings as a means of processing and making cognizable human experience and the knowledge derived from such experience (p. 137). While prevalent across the cultural spectrum, Ong argues that narrative has served a particularly pragmatic purpose in what he calls “primary oral cultures,” which are essentially non-literate cultures (p. 1). This pragmatism assumes two forms: organization, in the sense that such cultures cannot relate to scientific means of classification, and thus instead use stories to systematize their bank of knowledge and experience (p. 137); and durability, in that narratives have lasting value because they can hold much information while being committed to memory through repetition and mnemonic devices such as plot (p. 138). Beyond its functional uses, narrative in its oral form can be considered, to a certain extent, something that comes naturally to all human subjects, as “every human being in every culture who is not physiologically or psychologically impaired learns to talk” (p. 81). However, with the advent of writing and, especially, print, Ong contends, the fleeting temporality of public oral narration—for sound is “essentially evanescent, and it is sensed as evanescent” (p. 32)—has given way to the more entrenched and private spatiality of chirographic authorship—for writing and print have repurposed and concretized “the originally oral, spoken word in visual space” (p. 121)—effectively invisibilizing the narrator, as in the case of fiction writing, and even, in the case of drama, doing away with the narrator altogether, as narrative structures transformed from the episodic to the Freytag-pyramid form that is familiar to most literate peoples today (pp. 144-145). Associated with this

transformation is the notion that writing is a more reflective act than speaking and is thus a "consciousness-raising activity" (p. 147), suggesting that oral narration is, evidently, not—at least in Ong's eyes. Consequently, storytelling and, likewise, oral cultures are now perceived by the majoritarian society as, for instance, inherently conservative (pp. 41-42), not objective (pp. 45-46), and homeostatic (pp. 46-49), thereby delegitimizing and discrediting the experiences of those whose narratives are steeped in orality.

Yet, as Emevwo Biakolo (1999) rightly points out, Ong's (1982/2012) claims of an orality/literacy binary is simply another example of the kind of Manichaean dialectic (p. 50) that Northern/Western scholars such as Samuel P. Huntington (1993)[6] and his "clash of civilizations" have long attempted to impose on social and cultural analysis. Ong (1982/2012) fails to take into account the complexities of social change that most, if not all, societies around the world, including the primarily oral cultures of which he speaks, have undergone and continue to undergo; thus, Biakolo (1999) asserts, "to speak of them as if they are fixed in a putative pristine oral condition is a piece of anachronism" (p. 48). Likewise, it cannot be said that even the most steadfastly literate cultures have not retained and demonstrated some evidence of orality in their everyday practices (p. 48; see also de Certeau, 1984). Orality and literacy, in effect, overlap, irrespective of the global hegemony that falsely privileges certain societies and cultures over others. Hence, it is possible to think of both literacy *and* orality as domains in

[6] In his controversial paper, "The clash of civilizations?", Huntington (1993) argues that contemporary conflicts are primarily cultural in character, with different "civilizations" concretely and statically defined and resolutely opposed to each other. Much of his article is framed around the dialectic of the West/non-West.

which both conscientization and creativity are possible.

The kind of colonialist thinking exemplified by Ong's work is one of the primary reasons why the content of many oral stories have been delegitimized and swept aside when it matters most to cultures such as the First Nations, whose histories are inseparable from their stories, each uniquely constructed and told from nation to nation (see, among others, Welsh, 1991; Stevenson, 1998; Akenahew, 1999; Eigenbrod, 1995). Indeed, as a collective effort whereby community members contribute "[m]yths, prophesies, songs, dances, religious rituals, genealogies, [and] personal testimonies" (Welsh, 1991, p. 18) that blend modes and concepts of time, spirituality, and experience (Stevenson, 1998, p. 26), oral traditions and storytelling are not merely a *part* of these cultures; in many ways they *are* these cultures. The stories themselves are living, breathing documents—the embodiment of a people and its history.

Here, Ong's (1982/2012) work does hold some relevance. His condescending reference to such "oral thinking" as "sophisticated" and "reflective" (p. 56) aside, Ong does recognize the "somatic" features of orality, in that "[s]poken words are always modifications of a total, existential situation, which always engages the body" (p. 67). For a number of the First Nations, this means that oral history can be embedded with a host of other actions that are just as meaningful as reciting the words themselves. In other words, *what was said* at an event, for example, cannot be divorced from *how it is expressed.* The *adawx*,[7] which are the oral narratives of the Tsimshian people, is one

[7] According to Susan Marsden (2002), "The Adawx […] contain limx'ooy, ancient songs expressing loss during times of hardship, and give rise to visual images—*ayuks*, or crests—represented on poles and on ceremonial regalia […]. In every generation, adawx are reaffirmed in feasts, during which chiefs recount their lineages' adawx in the presence of chiefs from their own and other nations" (p. 103).

visceral instance of this bodily manifestation of storytelling.

So intricate and multi-dimensional are these narratives, however, that they have not been cognizable to decision-makers in key socio-political institutions in Canada's colonialist society. Historically, the Canadian legal system has proven to be a particularly tough arena for the First Nations to tell their stories as a means of imparting their memory and understanding of historical events pertaining to land claims and treaty rights. Those who are tasked with overseeing the courts—judges, solicitors, even scholars summoned as "experts"—have relied primarily on the written word as well as their own Eurocentric world views to guide them in their arguments and decisions (see, among others, McRanor, 1997; Borrows, 2002; McCall, 2003; Preston, 2005; Thuen, 2004; Williams, 1996). While in the past few decades anti-colonial social researchers such as Julie Cruikshank (1994) and Shauna McRanor (1997) have pushed for greater institutional recognition of First Nations oral traditions, it was really not until the *Delgamuukw* decision of 1997[8] that Indigenous ways of telling stories were given serious consideration by the courts as a legitimate means of record keeping (see Culhane, 1998; Roness and McNeil, 2000).

Despite the progress being made in this regard, however, the situation is still far from ideal. Referring to *Delgamuukw* and its legacy, Sophie McCall (2003) describes the current oral history model defined by the Canadian justice system as "antagonistic" (p. 326) to Indigenous rights, contending that it can never convey the full breadth of

[8] In the Delgamuukw decision (*Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, 1997), the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that judges must consider Aboriginal oral traditions as legitimate forms of historical evidence in cases involving treaty claims.

meaning inherent in indigenous narratives due to their elaborate and often performative character (p. 325). This “performativity” that is such a critical aspect of autochthonic oral traditions speaks to the complexities of (hi)story and its enmeshment with identity. Yet it should be noted that while storytelling-as-memory work plays a more pivotal role in their cultural survival than such a process does in many other cultures and societies, the experiences of Aboriginal Nations with the Canadian courts—a remnant of colonialist and imperialist institutional thinking—are emblematic of the ways that all stories that are not discursively intelligible to those with decision-making power are rendered insufficient, irrelevant, and invisible. Without the stories of those of us in the margins to represent our histories in dominant narratives of identity, such as those of nationhood and community, our contributions to and presences in those narratives become and remain lost, silenced, which could have negative ramifications for us not only politically, socially, culturally, and economically, but also emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically. Through memory work, however, we REC allosexuals, like the First Nations, can stitch our stories back into the narrative quilts that matter to us, making known our dissonant and dissident histories. As Kuhn (2002) suggests, “Telling stories about the past, our past, is a key moment in the making of our selves” (p. 2). We are born into an empty space of being, filling it with knowledge as we grow—knowledge that we inherit from our ancestors as well as that which we produce ourselves—and bringing it to the surface of the skin and into the world through performance, citing people, places, and events circulating in memory that continually re-create us in (dis)identity.

Gender and Performativity

In referring to "performance" and "performativity," I do not mean to use these terms in the sense of populist forms of spectacle. Certainly, the very notion of what constitutes "performance" in Northern/Western culture has taken some intriguing turns in recent years, evolving, as D. Soyini Madison and Judith Hamera (2006) explain,

> into ways of comprehending how human beings fundamentally make culture, affect power, and reinvent their ways of being in the world. The insistence on performance as a way of *creation* and *being* as opposed to the long held notion of performance as entertainment has brought forth a movement to seek and articulate the phenomenon of performance in its multiple manifestations and imaginings. (authors' emphasis) (p. xii)

In tracing the genealogy of this "movement," Madison and Hamera suggest that its origins date back to the 19th century, when the privileged classes, who through their mastery of oral rhetoric had long exerted control over the masses in many parts of Europe and North America, saw the underclasses begin to take up and deploy the spoken word themselves as a means of resistance, creating "a contested space" where their own opinions and concerns could be publicly and openly aired and debated (p. xiv). Later, in the work of social critics such as Kenneth Burke (1945), J. L. Austin (1955), and Austin's student, John R. Searle (1969), greater attention is paid to the more visceral effects of "the speech-act," which "is [an] action that is performed when a word is uttered," indicating that words not only merely describe, but also "[*do*] *something* that makes a material, physical, and situational difference" that is felt and experienced in "reality" (Madison and Hamera, 2006, p. xvi). Building on this material analysis, Wallace Bacon (1979) theorizes that interpretation through performance enables performers to reach out "beyond the self" and connect with "worldly Others" (Madison and Hamera, 2006, p. xv).

In continuing with their genealogical examination of performance studies, Madison and Hamera (2006) credit anthropologist Victor Turner (1982) with making the initial link between expression and experience, such that "[e]xperience now becomes the very source of performance" (Madison and Hamera, 2006, p. xvii). While theorists such as Dwight Conquergood (1986) later argue that performance begets experience, from Turner's perspective these two elements function through a somewhat reciprocal and symbiotic relationship (Madison & Hamera, 2006, p. xvii). Jacques Derrida (1988) then expands on Turner's idea by countering both Austin's and Searle's notions of speech-acts as producing a certain reality and instead suggesting that such a reality materializes through "repetition and familiarity" (Madison & Hamera, 2006, p. xvi). The historicity of speech and, by extension, action, therefore give it a citational quality, in that what is said and done now has been performed many times before—a repetition of the past that effects a present reality. Despite the ostensibly conflicting approaches espoused by Derrida and Austin and Searle, however, Madison and Hamera (2006) believe that these differing contemplations on performance "are not in contradiction, but form a dialectic and creative tension" (p. xvi) that build upon each other to create the afore-mentioned reality.

In arriving at Judith Butler's work in the late 1980s and well into the 1990s, we see the potential applications of performance studies in the analysis of specific identities and the politics that frequently envelops such identities through Butler's conceptualization of "performativity." Originally introducing her contemplations on the topic in 1988 in an article published in *Theatre Journal*, Butler expands on her theory in 1990 in her book *Gender Trouble* and further develops it in 1993 in another book,

Bodies That Matter. In her preface to the second edition of *Gender Trouble* (1999), however, Butler seeks to clarify her position on performativity, as it has been a key topic of interpretation and debate amongst many scholars in the social sciences and humanities over the years. In this preface, Butler (1999) provides the original premise behind her musings, which is her response to what she had seen in the 1980s as the rigid, binary thinking that had been plaguing feminist politics at that time. This premise revolves around two central tenets pertaining to the performativity of gender, which are clearly influenced by theorists and philosophers such as those mentioned above, particularly Turner and Derrida, as well as Simone de Beauvoir (1974) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962): that the expectations one has of one’s gender, based on one’s essentialist notions of “gender,” ultimately leads to the bodily constitution of those expectations through performance; and that gender is performed as an ongoing process wherein cultural norms around gender are continually reiterated and re-cited through “repetition” and “ritual” (Butler, 1999, p. xv). In other words, gender is a discursive fabrication, according to Butler (see also Foucault, 1978/1990); it is a product in the form of corporeal gestures and behaviours, of historically and perpetually-reproduced normative beliefs around and attitudes towards gender. Gender, then, as a normative social prescription that determines what is acceptably “real,” enacts a kind of violence on certain bodies that fall outside the purview of such norms, particularly sexually-abject identities such as those of queer subjects (Butler, 1999, p. xxi; see also Butler, 1993).

In framing gender as performative, Butler (1993) not only highlights its constraints and oppressiveness, but also its capacity for subversion. It is not, however, a

subversion that is voluntarily taken up by subjects as a means of "external opposition to power" (p. 15); rather, it is a subversion that is built into the very process of subjectification, in that agency is "a reiterative and rearticulatory practice, immanent to power" (p. 15)—that is, resistance is an effect of the "force of citationality" (p. 220) that gives birth to the subject. As Butler (1993), in her analysis of Slavoj Žižek's (1989) work on identity and subjectivity, explains:

> "Agency" would then be the double-movement of being constituted in and by a signifier, where "to be constituted" means "to be compelled to cite or repeat or mime" the signifier itself. Enabled by the very signifier that depends for its continuation on the future of that citational chain, agency is the hiatus in iterability, the compulsion to install an identity through repetition, which requires the very contingency, the undetermined interval, that identity insistently seeks to foreclose. The more insistent the foreclosure, the more exacerbated the temporal non-identity of that which is heralded by the signifier of identity. (p. 220)

What this means for a politics that rallies around a particular identity category is that the promise of unity such a category offers to those subjectivities that fall within it can never truly be fulfilled. This is because there are always exclusions of subjectivities that it claims to describe and represent, yet is confounded by due to their apparent lack of coherence and intelligibility (p. 188), rendering any investment in the "purity" of the category "phantasmatic," a fantasy (p. 191). Butler (1993) refers to this inability of identity categories to live up to their promise of inclusivity as a "catachresis," an error in naming (p. 214 & p. 220).

It is in these "misfirings" (Hollywood, 2002, p. 109) that the "*reality* of gender" (author's emphasis) (Butler, 1990/1999, p. xxiv) comes into question, since the presence of abject subjectivities infers that reality can be altered and revised, interpellating "new" realities and identities (Butler, 1993, p. 220; see also Hall, 1996a) that transgress the boundaries of what Robin Bernstein (2009) refers to as the "script" and even, as Michel

de Certeau (1984) argues, "reverse" well-known stories (p. 89). Viewed this way, this reconsideration of the "real" opens the door to political possibilities because, as Butler (1999) asserts, "no political revolution is possible without a radical shift in one's notion of the possible and the real" (p. xxiv). Such "a radical shift" is the very reason, for example, that queer theory, identity, and activism exist, and why Butler (1993; 1999) and other queer theorists (see, for example, Warner, 1999; Kinsman, 1996, 2001; Puar, 2007; Berlant, 1997; Sears, 2005) passionately push for an ongoing interrogation of queerness as an identity category unto itself. It is also why transsexual writers and activists such as Jay Prosser (2008) call for more transsexual stories to be told as a means of countering restrictive "medicodiscursive texts" (p. 9) that only serve to delimit transsexual bodies. By informing the narratives of identity with other citations—hidden histories and suppressed memories that cannot help but insert themselves into the performative process of subjectification—it becomes possible for those cast into a gendered alterity to become comprehensible in their own way and on their own terms and, thus, brought back from the brink of precarity (Butler, 2009).

Problematizing Performativity

Not everyone concurs with Butler's theory of performativity as a means to a political end, however. One of her most vocal critics has been trans scholar Viviane Namaste (2000), who has picked apart the way that Butler has analyzed drag queens through a performativity framework. Namaste (2000) does not necessarily disagree with what she believes is Butler's (1990) claim that drag exposes the "imitative" and contingent nature of gender; however, Namaste does take issue with Butler's failure "to account for the

context in which these gender performances occur"—a context that is defined by and steeped in a gay male consumer regulatory regime that dictates how bodies that present "[e]lements of femaleness and femininity" may move and function within those spaces (Namaste, 2000, p. 10). While acceptable as theatrical performance onstage, such bodies are denied their ontological status offstage, with the other reasons for their existence—exploring gender identity, engaging in political action, and earning money, for example (p. 11)— ignored. In short, as their attempted interdiction from the 1992 Montreal Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade by its organizers exemplifies, drag queens are, Namaste suggests, "[a]ppropriate objects to look at, [but] are not subjects alongside whom one marches" (p. 11).

Meanwhile, in comparison to drag queens, transsexual bodies are marginalized to an even greater extent in Butler's theoretical framework, according to Namaste. Citing the former's analysis of Latina transsexual prostitute Venus Extravaganza from the film *Paris Is Burning*, Namaste (2000) argues that Butler's scrutiny of racialized transsexual sex workers such as Extravaganza ignores the "the material and symbolic conditions of race and class" as well as the specific forms of violence faced by transsexuals in day-to-day life (p. 13). Thus, Butler's constructionist approach to transsexual identity is not only condescending in Namaste's eyes, but also hegemonic, as it posits that the real world issues that transsexuals face are a matter of performance, rather than as "real, lived, viable experience[s]" (p. 14; see also Düttmann, 2009). Instead of "understand[ing] transsexuality on its own terms," Butler queers it, lumping it in with all other transgressive sexual and gender identities that attempt to subvert "the binary sex/gender system" through a politics influenced greatly by Butler's conceptualization

of performativity (Namaste, 2005, p. 20). In relegating and containing gender to the realm of performance, then, "transsexuals," like "women," cannot even exist, which poses a problem for them in the quotidian functioning of their lives when normative institutions such as healthcare only recognize essentialized gender categories, as Namaste (2005) points out.

Such views highlight Butler's neglect of the role of space in gender identity formation in her work on performativity. Moreover, Namaste also presents some very cogent points on the pragmatics of fixing gender in accordance with a binary system. Yet, returning to a purely essentialist framing of identity is not the solution, either. Namaste's (2005) contention that "to state that one is neither a man nor a woman, or that one is a third gender […] ignores the very fundamental reality of being in the world" (p. 22) overlooks other contexts that demonstrate how the man/woman binary is a Western and colonialist construction to begin with. For example, many First Nations prior to European colonization recognized and accepted the existence of more than two gender categories,[9] often assigning specific and highly-esteemed roles to individuals who did not identify as "men" or "women" (Meyer-Cook & Labelle, 2004; Meyer-Cook, 2008; Driskill, 2004; Adams & Phillips, 2006; Cameron, 2005; Driskill, Finley, Gilley, & Morgensen, 2011; Williams, 1986/1992; Roscoe, 1991; Burns, 1988; Kenny, 1988; Sun, 1988; Tafoya, 1997). While one might argue that the recognition of the unique role of such gender-variant persons among certain First Nations had been nullified by Christian

[9] Evan B. Towle and Lynn M. Morgan (2002) caution against the Western romanticization of non-Western gender systems, as it often results in the appropriation of such systems by Westerners, who evacuate them of their cultural specificities while simultaneously "reinforcing […] ethnocentric assumptions" (p. 477).

missionaries and their imperative to convert the Aboriginal masses and therefore holds no relevance today, there are many First Nations activists who would beg to differ. In fact, as Fiona Meyer-Cook and Diane Labelle (2004) explain:

> The term Two-Spirit or Two-Spirited was […] coined in Winnipeg in 1990, [*sic*] at a gathering of the Native American/First Nation gay and lesbian conference [as] a generic term […] to provide a modern means of regrouping Aboriginal people with other gender and sexuality identification, as well as to reawaken the spiritual nature of the role these people are meant to play in their communities. (p. 31)

In different ethnocultural contexts, then, gender can take on particular meanings that do not necessarily align with the "binary gender system" that the Occident takes for granted as "the norm." Reclaiming these meanings becomes a form of resistance and empowerment for people such as those of the First Nations, whose traditional perspectives on gender demand to be taken as seriously as those of the dominant population in order to further the process of decolonization.

Dorthe Staunæs (2003) observes that "[i]n the practical, political arena […] there seems to be a tendency towards fixing categories and identities and using the concepts in certain ideologically informed ways" (p. 103). Thus, as a tool to achieve ideologically-motivated ends, essentialism presents its own political risks and dangers, as well. So in the face of these two modes of subjectification, essentialism and performativity, what is a person to do? Peter Digeser (1994) articulates the problem as one that traps the subject in this either/or scenario: "Whether one sees one's identity as essentialist or performative, the logic of identity would still result in production [*sic*] of a set of identities that, at the very least, one does not accept or desire" (p. 670). To Digeser, neither theory offers a viable foundation upon which to build an effective politics (p. 672). Yet, perhaps the problem here is misplaced; for while neither essentialism nor

performativity on its own appears to be a terribly appealing option in the pursuit of resisting marginalization, the line that separates them presents an arena in which exploring the alternative analytical tools that take both forms of subjectification into account is made possible. In this regard, looking at how some theorists have applied performativity to race proves to be instructive.

Race and Performativity

Lorne Dwight Conquergood (2002) as well as Madison and Hamera (2006) have observed that the study of performance has experienced a sea change in recent years in the face of expansive and unstoppable globalization, facilitating contact and, thus, exchange between cultures and heightening the awareness of global concerns as well as bringing into sharper relief issues of a more localized nature. Arjun Appadurai (1990) articulates this phenomenon through his concept of the "ethnoscape," which refers to

> the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers and other moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world, and appear to affect the politics of and between nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree. (p. 297)

Thus, in our ethnoscaped world, we have become exposed to (and have exposed to others) hitherto unheard and unknown stories and histories, illuminating new epistemologies and making visible oppressions as well as resistances that have until recently been obscured by dominant hegemonic narratives. It is because of such exchanges through our *vis-à-vis* encounters with each other that Butler has been able to develop her ideas on the performativity of gender. The same can also be said of those who have taken up Butler's work and used it as an analytical tool with which to examine the construction of racial(ized) and ethnic(ized) subjectivities.

In her study of racialized performances among mixed-race women, Minelle Mahtani (2002) remarks that "racialized productions, like gendered productions, are culturally constructed, rather than biological, imperatives" (p. 428), though Butler (1999) cautions against directly analogizing race to gender (p. xvi). Certainly, Mahtani's (2002) position on racial performativity diverges from Butler's description of gender performativity, in that Mahtani concludes that racial performances are agentive in an active, voluntarist sense based on her assessment of her research participants as making conscious racially-performative choices that are contingent upon the contexts of time and place (p. 431). This latter notion of place and space is of particular interest to Mahtani since, as a cultural geographer, she finds that Butler's focus on identity as a temporal construction comes at the expense of a spatial analysis of processes of subjectification (see also Probyn, 1996). To Mahtani (2002), racial performativity is as dependent on space as it is on time; for the mixed-race women of her study, making performative decisions regarding their race is a matter of deploying their understanding of the liminal racialized spaces that they occupy as a means of navigating and negotiating intersubjective encounters within the ever-shifting social milieus that they traverse in their day-to-day lives (p. 435). What Mahtani does not address in her study, however, is the citationality that undergirds Butler's theorization of performativity. While Mahtani's research participants may make use of decision-making power through space and time to a certain extent, from a Butlerian standpoint their agency is still derived from what Stephen Knadler (2003) terms "over-cites," which, as applied to processes of identity formation, refers to the excess of citations that cannot be contained by dominant discourses and, thus, spill out of "discourse's regulatory 'oversight'" (p.

74). For mixed-race people such as the women interviewed by Mahtani, the act of passing for one race or another is demonstrative of such "over-cites," since, Sara Ahmed (1999) argues, it "involves the re-opening or re-staging of a fractured history of identifications that constitutes the limits to a given subject's mobility" (p. 93). Thus, in this sense, "being" is also a form of "doing."

"Mixed-race" as a social category also figures prominently in Alicia Arrizón's (2002) deconstruction of the *mulata* body, a site of racial performativity that she compares to a "Classic Cuban Cocktail" comprised of rum, dark crème de cacao (chocolate), and lime (p. 136)—"ingredients" that represent a history of "colonial encounters" (p. 137). Employing Antonio Benitez-Rojo's (1996) ideation of the "syncretic artefact," which conceives of the subject as a signifier constituted by, rather than synthesizing, differences (Arrizón, 2002, p. 137), Arrizón exposes the transcultural process at work within the mulata body, wherein these ingredients intersect and interact in ways that not only cite the violent events that have structured (post)colonial relations, but also locate the dialectical spaces wherein difference has been and still is performed as a means of resistance (p. 138). The mulata body thus enacts its own kind of "singularity"—a hybrid way of being situated in-between racialized positionalities that performs difference as a means of subverting dominant discourses while laying bare "the relation between self and other, black and white (and the in-between)" (p. 149).

Meanwhile, José Esteban Muñoz (2006), unlike Arrizón, does not view the Latina body as resting in the "in-between"; rather, he frames such an identity within the context of "brownness."[10] According to Muñoz (2006), the performativity of brownness

[10] Although Muñoz links it with Latino/a identity, "brown" identity is signified differently in other

is informed both by the epistemologies of blackness that so permeate the North American social, historical, and cultural imaginary and by an awareness that whiteness and all the racialized power it holds is always beyond the brown body's grasp, thereby rendering brownness "illegible" in the normative contexts of whiteness (p. 680). This illegibility is inseparable from "the *affective* performance of ethnic and racial normativity" (my emphasis)—a performance that regulates access to "the majoritarian public sphere" (Muñoz, 2000, p. 68) by structuring "belonging" as its own kind of hegemonic discourse defined by whiteness. As a "structure of feeling"—a phrase coined by Raymond Williams (1977) to describe a set of relations "concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt" (p. 132)—belonging is performative of a particular manner of being that cites certain "normalized codes [that make] material the belongings they purport to simply describe" (Bell, 1999, p. 3). In other words, the "feeling" that belonging—or not-belonging—invokes is, for minoritized and majoritarian subjects alike, material in and of itself. To perform one's race, therefore, is to perform one's sense of belonging in a milieu of whiteness. The illegibility of brownness and brown affectivity to which Muñoz refers, however, also illuminates other ways of belonging that need not take whiteness as their teleological object; for in our desire to belong, as Elspeth Probyn (1996) contends, "we figure relations of proximity to others and other forms of sociality" (p. 13), as our singularities, formed through the citing of manifold histories, brush up against each other, make contact, and connect us with one another.

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locations. Heather Frost (2010), for example, notes that in Surrey, British Columbia, brownness is a categorical marker taken up by Punjabi high school students.

Singularity and Belonging

To Probyn (1996), the term “belonging,” in comparison to “identity,” captures the desire people have for sociality and co-existence with each other in space and time (p. 5). “Identity” suggests stable and static categories, their allure of inclusivity masking their essentializing compulsion. “Belonging,” on the other hand, recognizes that we live our lives as singularities—modes of existence comprised of our specificities of difference that always circulate within us, shifting and mutating at moments of contact (p. 13) not only with other people, but also other places and manners of being (p. 19). It is through belonging that our yearning to be and become is made real; for while we may begin our ontological journey in identity categories, they cannot contain the excess of citations that accumulate in performance, and so launch us into the world to navigate social relations in singular ways that “disrupt the sequencing of the dominant order, shift the view of the center” (p. 27). In short, in our desire to belong, identity, history, and affect come together within us to be performed through our singularities.

Before continuing, a distinction between affect and emotion must first be made. In her introduction to a special issue of *Qui Parle* that focuses on affect theory, Marta Figlerowicz (2012) condenses the philosophical contemplations on this topic into three strands: 1) the “unconscious” experience of a feeling, which is termed “affect”; 2) the conscious experience of a feeling that is considered to be “reliable,” which is viewed by theorists as “emotion”; and 3) the awareness of a feeling that is believed to be “unreliable,” which Figlerowicz describes as “aesthetic or post-therapeutic” (p. 5). Brian Massumi (1995) equates “affect” with “intensity” (p. 89)—what the body experiences biologically in the precise moment when the “resonating levels” of such dialectical

aspects of existence as “mind and body,” “past and future,” and “passivity and activity” emerge in their specificity, then vanish just as quickly (p. 94). Meanwhile, emotion, which Megan Watkins (2010) says is usually associated more with the mind (p. 278), is fixed rather than fleeting (Massumi, 1995, p. 88). Emotion, in other words, is affect captured (p. 96). Sara Ahmed (2004) suggests that emotion “is an affect that leaves its mark or trace,” its “impression” (p. 6), while Deborah B. Gould (2009) sees it “as one’s personal expression of what one is feeling in a given moment, an expression that is structured by social convention, by culture” (p. 20). According to Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (2010), affect comes up in the in-between spaces of relationality (p. 1), “mark[ing] a body’s *belonging* to a world of encounters or; [*sic*] a world’s belonging to a body of encounters but also, in *non-belonging*” (authors’ emphasis) (p. 2). Affect announces the singularity of one’s body, which becomes imbricated with other bodies experiencing affective moments, producing a “relationality […] that persists, in adjacency and duration, alongside the affects and bodies that gather up in motley, always more-than-human collectivity” (p. 13). In effect, these “affective singularities” become “affective communities” (Gandhi, 2006).

It is Giorgio Agamben (1990/1993) who describes this way of being, this singularity, as “whatever being”— “whatever” referring to, as Agamben’s translator, Michael Hardt (1993), remarks, “that which is neither particular nor general, neither individual nor generic” (107). Thus, “whatever being” does not constrain the subject seeking spaces of belonging with what he describes as the “false dilemma” that demands that one “choose between the ineffability of the individual and the intelligibility of the universal” (Agamben, 1990/1993, p. 1); rather, as Karen Shimakawa (2004) observes,

Agamben's (1990/1993) concept proffers "a possible alternative way to conceive of (communal) subjectivity that does not depend on stable political categories for its integrity, without requiring one to dispense with the categories altogether" (Shimakawa, 2004, p. 151). The whatever-ness of singularity—the idea that one is bound neither by particular categories nor by their complete absence—enables the subject to be defined by desire, by love (Agamben, 1990/1993, pp. 1-2). This love, according to Agamben, is not a universal love, nor is it directed at specific qualities to be found in an object of love; it is, instead, an expansive, holistic love encompassing all of the "predicates" that constitute the loved one's singularity (p. 2). It is a love, in other words, that accounts for "the totality of all possibilities" in social relations between subjects (p. 67).

Where we, as desiring subjects, find each other is at the threshold of singularity and the outside—the surface upon which "the forces which constitute the outside and the inside as dichotomous" are made visible (Probyn, 1996, p. 12). It is here where we are exposed to and engage in different forms of belonging, what Probyn (1996) refers to as "outside belongings," and it is here where we move, shift, change in our ways of being. Shimakawa (2004) views this threshold as a frontier resting between belonging and not-belonging; our "*desire to belong*" spurs an "*impulse to belong*" (author's emphasis) (p. 152) that carries us across the frontier at decisive moments, though not towards an inclusion among concretized, abject subjects. Likewise, we may equally have an "impulse to *not-belong*" (author's emphasis) (p. 152), resisting calls to inclusion. Muñoz's (2000, 2006) brown subjects, then, may have an impulse to belong based on their common experience of "feeling brown"—the "recognition [that] flickers between minoritarian subjects" (2006, p. 680)—and the desire to connect on that affective level,

or they may have an impulse to not belong for the very same reason. Their specificities do not overwhelm their singularities. Belonging thus becomes about belonging for its own sake, rather than for that of being included in a hierarchy of identities or a meaningless universal subjectivity. In Agambenian terms, belonging is performed affectively. Consequently, it opens up new possibilities not only for social interaction, but also for a politics free of identitarian constraints. Such a conceptualization of belonging has particular potential for minoritized subjects, including REC allosexuals, who find themselves marginalized in multiple and interlocking ways. In this sense, whatever being resonates strongly with Muñoz’s (1999) theorization of disidentification.

Intersectionality and Disidentification

Muñoz’s (1999) seminal work on disidentification offers a valuable extension of Agamben’s (1990/1993) concept into contemplations on REC allosexual subjectivity and the possibilities for resistance and resilience therein. Citing Michel Pêcheux (1982), Muñoz (1999) notes that dominant ideologies discipline subjects by classifying them according to a good/bad binary, whereby the former aligns itself with such ideologies (“identification”), while the latter actively opposes them (“counter-identification”) (p. 11; see also Medina, 2003). Disidentification disrupts this binary, which would otherwise reproduce not only itself, but the ideologies that created it. Influenced by William Connolly’s (1991) musings on identity, Muñoz (1999) describes the process of disidentification as taking place in the space where the dialectic is created, a “point of collision of perspectives […] [that] is precisely the moment of negotiation when hybrid, racially predicated, and deviantly gendered identities arrive at representation” (p. 6), dis-

rupturing normative narratives of belonging that ossify ways of being derived from essentialist or constructivist models of the self. Muñoz employs the term “identities-in-difference” to imbue these dissonant formations of identity with some sense of definition. As identities that “emerge from a failed interpellation within the dominant public sphere,” these identities-in-difference “contribute to the function of a counterpublic sphere” through a process of disidentification with the mass public (p. 7). A disidentificatory space, then, is a whatever being space, wherein belonging is performed as discordance, as dissidence.

To help articulate and clarify what is meant by “disidentification,” José Medina (2003) deploys Wittgenstein’s (1976) elaboration on the family as paradigmatic of differential subjectivity. Wittgenstein, according to Medina (2003), views identity categories as akin to families; as with a family, the composition of the members of a given identity group will be heterogeneous while being interlinked by similarities, though “there is no fixed set of necessary and sufficient conditions that determines membership” (p. 659). Thus, the similarities hold the “family” together and differentiate it from other “families,” while the diversity within the family leaves it vulnerable to instability. In terms of identification and counteridentification, such processes rely on what Medina refers to as a certain “blindness” that masks this interplay between similarity and difference and presumes the solidity of the family (p. 663). However, as Medina asserts, there is always “identity trouble” present in the form of misfit identities that the family attempts to exclude, but is never able to do so successfully; such identities are born of disidentification, which

> messes up the relations within and across families, inviting the rearticulation of the networks of similarities and differences that sustain familial identities. In this

> way disidentification is an occasion for subversion, for disrupting established relations of similarity and difference and the unifications and divisions they create. (p. 665)

A process of disidentification, then, recognizes the excess of citations that is inherent to us all, illuminating the ways that we belong and do not belong to different groups. It also shows us that we cannot claim membership to just one group, but to multiple groups simultaneously (p. 668), thus accentuating the intersectional nature of disidentificatory practices.

Indeed, intersectionality, a framework first conceptualized by the Combahee River Collective (1978/1981)[11] and later given its name by African American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989/2003), is integral to Muñoz's (1999) theorization of disidentification, as it makes evident the "multiplicity of interlocking identity components and the ways in which they affect the social" (p. 8). Avtar Brah and Anne Phoenix (2004) describe

> the concept of "intersectionality" as signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis [*sic*] of differentiation—economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential—intersect in historically specific contexts. The concept emphasizes that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands. (p. 76)[12]

Employing such a concept guards against the normativizing pressures of monocausal or monothematic identity-based paradigms that obscure or deny the complex social forces at work in the subjugation of multiplicative subjectivities.

Muñoz (1999) cites Frantz Fanon's (1952/1967) infamously homophobic

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[11] Initial statement dated April 1977 (Combahee, p. 274).

[12] See also: Crenshaw, 1991; Creese and Stasiulis, 1996; Staunæs, 2003; Jiwani, 2006; Collins, 2000/2009; Collins, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2007; Kumashiro, 2001; Wilkinson, 2003; Johnson, 2005; Bilge, 2010; van der Meide, 2001, 2002.

statements in his seminal anti-racist and anti-colonialist book, *Black Skins, White Masks*, as an example of the more traditionally reductive and structural approach to identity analysis that assumed queerness as "a white thing," arguing that a disidentificatory approach would provide a queer black reader, for instance, with the means to interrogate Fanon's homophobia while still valuing his anti-colonial position (pp. 8-9). As Muñoz (1999) explains, "This maneuver [*sic*] resists an unproductive turn toward good dog/bad dog criticism and instead leads to an identification that is both mediated and immediate, a disidentification that enables politics" (p. 9). For REC allosexuals, then, a disidentificatory practice cannot be divorced from an intersectional consciousness.

Disidentification is a process that is also tangled up with our personal histories. As bearers of memory, disidentifying subjects will cite narratives from their respective pasts as well as those of their ancestors as they live out their present, subverting the discourses that endeavour to structure their histories according to the identification/counteridentification binary. As Muñoz (1999) states,

> To disidentify is to read oneself and one's own life narrative in a moment, object, or subject that is not culturally coded to "connect" with the disidentifying subject. It is not to pick and choose what one takes out of an identification. It is not to wilfully evacuate the politically dubious or shameful components within an identificatory locus. Rather, it is the reworking of those energies that do not elide the "harmful" or contradictory components of any identity. It is an acceptance of the necessary interjection that has occurred in such situations. (p. 12)

For minoritized subjects suffocating under the weight of essentializing imperatives thrust upon them by ideology, disidentification offers a means of resistance that avoids the traps of separatism so prevalent in identity politics. It permits such subjects to desire ideals that may be defined by whiteness and heteronormativity, such as beauty or masculinity/femininity, but "desire [them] with a difference" (p. 15). The materiality of

the disidentifying subject's body, informed by its own historical narrative, thus gains recognition through the performance of desire, yet is simultaneously transformed by "new possibilities" that distance it from confining prescriptive norms. Ultimately, then,

> [d]isidentification is about recycling and rethinking encoded meaning. The process of disidentification scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the encoded message's universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recircuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications. Thus, disidentification is a step further than cracking open the code of the majority; it proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture. (p. 31)

Disidentification is both performance-as-being and being-as-performance. As an example of "queer of color critique" (Ferguson, 2004), it enables us as minoritized, intersectional subjects to explore our own archives of memory and collect moments in our histories with which to build up our performative repertoires (Taylor, 2003). When we experience a desire to belong or not-belong, the resultant impulse ushers forth a "doing" of our subjectivities—our *singularities*—that acknowledges the existence of the dominant discourses that aim to define us, yet simultaneously and actively resists those very same discourses by adapting them to our own narratives drawn from our personal repertoires. Therefore, disidentificatory practices, particularly when read through Agamben (1990/1993), provide REC allosexuals with a space that is neither in the margins nor in the centre, but is entirely unique and proprietary—a performative, affective space that is at once liminal, intersectional, hybrid, where frontiers shift as desires shift, where impulses determine the when, where, and how of subjectivities materializing into or retreating from belonging, where becoming-into-whatever-being occurs simply because we exist.

As the following chapters demonstrate, REC allosexual activists in Montreal are and have been thoroughly engaged in disidentificatory ways of being not only as a means of negotiating and manoeuvring through their quotidian lives, but also executing their activism. Instead of yielding their identities-in-difference to the dominant performative discourses of race and gender that attempt to structure their lives through repetition, these activists reach into their archives of historical memories as far back as periods of ancestral settlement and colonization and affectively perform the epistemologies culled from these memories in social spaces that are both private and public. Through an analysis of their life stories, I will show how the roots of their pasts nourish their present subjectivities, empowering them to such an extent that they move beyond merely addressing personal concerns to tackle larger concerns related to social, political, cultural, and economic justice, creating what Muñoz (2006) calls a “rip” (p. 684) in the discursive fabric that aims to shroud them. In so doing, these activists promote and perform a vision of the future that is unquestionably utopic in scope, yet not the utopia of dreams; rather, it is a utopia of attainable goals, of small victories that culminate in larger ones, of establishing *disidentificatory spaces* as a real option for displaced, non-normative subjectivities.

This is a space that I also inhabit when the impulse arises, and each time the impulses that I and my fellow REC allosexual activists experience take us into this space, our bonds of friendship grow stronger. In the next chapter, I will show how such a friendship can also pose certain methodological challenges when it becomes part of a research project such as that upon which my study is based.

Chapter Three

Listen and Learn:

Familiarity, Feeling, and the Intimate Insider in the Life Story Interview[13]

> *Why look for a history? Why look for a past? We are driven by longing, by desire, by pain: because we are made to feel insecure about our existence, because we are afraid to tell our families about our lovers, because we are invalidated by larger society, because we feel like outsiders from too many places, because we have been cut off from historical connection and ancestral roots by various degrees of coercion. For all these reasons and more, history can be a valuable source of validation and legitimization.*
>
> Jeeyeun Lee (1998, p. 199)

> *No language is neutral.*
>
> Dionne Brand (1998/2007, p. 269)

In the summer of 2009, I, along with a number of other representatives from different local REC allosexual organizations in Montreal, met with an official from a provincial government agency to discuss a possible collaboration. A few days following this meeting, which a number of us had agreed was a success, we received an email from a member of our group stating that she wished to withdraw from further discussions, after which she then proceeded to criticize each of the other members for our respective approaches to the meeting. Her words that were directed specifically to me, I found, were insulting and a complete betrayal of our friendship. But because they were in French, which is not my first language, I decided to give her the benefit of the doubt in case I had misinterpreted them. However, following a diplomatic response from another member of our group asking her to reconsider, she sent another email to us all, restating her earlier criticisms in much clearer and more precise language. This time my ire was raised, and I shot off a private email back to her, the contents of which I will not detail, but suffice it to say I ended our friendship then and there, deleting her email from all my address books and "unfriending" her from Facebook. While I had originally planned on interviewing her for my dissertation project due to the enormous amount of work she

[13] An edited version of this chapter appears in A. Sheftel & S. Zembrzycki (Eds), *Oral history off the record: Towards an ethnography of practice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. (Forthcoming)

had done as an activist, I felt so slighted by her emails that I thought it better to strike her from my list and disconnect myself from her than to hold my tongue and face her for an interview.

Two weeks following this, I received an email from her, in which she stated that she had thought long and hard about what she had said following my email retort to her and that she wanted to apologize for her remarks. I accepted her apology and apologized to her for what I had said, as well. Having patched things up, I arranged to interview her a few months later. During one of our sessions, I asked her what she thought were some of the obstacles to doing activism. Her reply caught me off guard; she told me that she felt she needed to learn how to handle certain situations better, and she cited our dispute as a prime example, effectively apologizing to me once again. This incident points to the way in which unexpected interpersonal conflicts can disrupt the research process, particularly in instances involving friendships, through which emotions and sensitivities can be heightened. In this case, fortunately, the problem was resolved and the friendship revived, and even contributed to an interesting reflection on her part in the interview.

* * *

Throughout my time as an activist in Montreal, I have been struck by the absence of REC voices in historical accounts of the local gay and lesbian community at-large, and likewise the lack of allosexual representation in the narratives of the city's various ethnocultural communities. To help remedy this, I decided that for my doctoral dissertation project, I would collect the life stories of friends of mine in Montreal who, like me, were also REC allosexual activists. In doing so, I hoped not only to fill this gap in history, but also to show the contributions we have made toward fighting both racism and heterosexism as well as the various phobias associated with these discourses. At the outset, I assumed that this would be a relatively straightforward endeavour, as there were not many individuals who "fit" the criteria for my project, and I already had relatively trusting relationships with most if not all of my narrators as well as varying degrees of background knowledge about them, not to mention the fact that I was also "one of them." However, as I was soon to discover, the privileges of friendship and insider-ness did not necessarily lead to an easier path in the research process.

This chapter will examine the impact that my friendships with the project narrators had on the life story interview process and how my insider status served as both an advantage and disadvantage in this pursuit. By comparing this experience with those of other oral history projects in which I have been involved, I will show how my relationship—or lack thereof—with each respective narrator has determined how I have listened, absorbed, and responded to the narrative being shared. Finally, I will apply my observations towards a troubling of the principle of "shared authority," which has been inextricably tied to oral history research since Michael Frisch (1990) coined the term over twenty years ago.

Why Life Stories?

Slim et al (2006) loosely define life story interviews as "normally private, one-to-one encounters between interviewer and narrator" that permit "a person to narrate the story of his or her whole life in all its dimensions: personal spiritual, social and economic" (p. 145). Charlotte Linde (1993) notes that the product of these interviews, the life story, serves a number of purposes, including: providing narrators with an opportunity to work through verbally their perception of themselves and to convey that perception to others; helping narrators determine their sense of belonging in different groups; and bringing epistemological "coherence" to the interviewee's narrative (p. 219). It is this latter characteristic of life stories, in particular—"coherence"—that has pulled my attention towards this particular mode of oral history storytelling for my research endeavour. Coherence is about making connections within and across texts, which occurs through the cooperative effort of the oral historian and the narrator in the specific context of the

interlocution between them (p. 12). Tilmann Habermas and Susan Bluck (2000) suggest that there is a process of “global coherence” working to unify the text in the life story (p. 750)—a sort of intratextuality, say Azriel Grysman and Judith A. Hudson (2010), that occurs between the “singular episodes and the broader narrative” (p. 565). It is this type of coherence that makes life story memories unique, as they “integrate the narrative told with the sense of self” (p. 565), contributing to the development of what Jerome Bruner (1986) calls “narrative knowledge” (qtd. in Etherington, 2009, p. 225). Such knowledge, Kim Etherington (2009) explains, emphasizes the meaning that people give to the experiences articulated in their narratives and how those meanings may change as the narration progresses, beckoning the audience to concentrate more on the details and contexts of these stories (p. 225). Thus, through this notion of coherence and the narrative knowledge that emerges from it, a life story becomes more than merely “a collection of important single events” (Demiray, Gülgöz, & Bluck, 2009, p. 711); it offers a sense of complexity about a person’s life, exposing the links between events and facilitating meaning-making processes that enable one to view another’s history as something closer to a whole—though still, as Alessandro Portelli (1991) would argue, bearing an element of “unfinishedness” (p. 55).

This is what I find especially intriguing about the life story approach; it enables me to look at the “big picture” of an individual’s life and observe the nuances that augment my understanding of that life. Moreover, I am drawn to the collaboration that is inherent to the production of a life story, for as Eileen J. Findlay (2010) reminds us, “Stories […] are not produced in isolation” (p. 163). Linde (1993) concurs, arguing that the achievement of coherence within a life story is a function of “cooperation” between

the speaker and the addressee: "The speaker works to construct a text whose coherence can be appreciated, and at the same time the addressee works to reach some understanding of it as a coherent text and to communicate that understanding" (p. 12). When strengthened by "feminist principles related to power and equality," life story research becomes not only collaborative, but "transparent and reflexive," as well (Etherington, 2009, p. 229; see also Brotman & Kraniou, 1999).

In addition to this collaborative relationship between individuals in life story research, there is also an element of conversation that occurs between different life stories that may be gathered in a larger project. Indeed, the way life stories speak to each other—their intertextuality—can also throw into relief certain connections between and patterns among various individual histories, which, in the context of my project, can help fortify and advance social movements (see Crawley and Broad, 2004). As Etherington (2009) states,

> Life stories also have meaning beyond the local and personal context; they resonate with others and outlast their telling or reading: they sometimes have profound consequences. They change us in ways we may not always anticipate because they can move us emotionally, change public and political attitudes and opinions, and sometimes influence future actions. (p. 226)

In this respect, life stories can be a useful tool for activism when read as a collection of texts as well as distinct and discreet units.

Finally, life story gathering is simply an enjoyable and engaging way to conduct research. It affords me the opportunity to learn more about my community while simultaneously giving me some precious time to socialize with my friends and, in the process, reinforcing—if not strengthening—our friendships. As Robert Atkinson (2009) has contemplated, "What we remember personally connects us with what everyone else

remembers. We all have shared memories and shared experiences that, when remembered, bring us even closer together” (p. 46). Furthermore, this type of research also permits me to revel in the art of storytelling, which Findlay (2010) refers to as “artful narration.” This is not the art of elitist culture, however; rather, it is art emanating from what Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson (1998) call “the rhetorical skills of ordinary speakers” (qtd. in Findlay, 2010, p. 165). In both an academic and an activist sense, then, life story work is not merely a methodology, but a pleasurable act (see Quinn & Meiners, 2009). In the world of dissertation research, such motivations are hard to come by.

Yet in spite of all the advantages I have seen in doing life story research, it has not been without its complications. While a linguist such as Linde (1993) may speak of texts at the level of orality, I have found that other “texts” also exist that shape the life story. In particular, the relationship between the speaker and the addressee is itself a text, as it has its own history that can intertwine with that of the story being told. In the case of strangers, this may not be an issue, as this history is being created as the story is being told; however, when the relationship is defined by friendship as well as relatable identificatory markers, then a different kind of intertextuality emerges, one that can influence the telling of the life story in unique and, as I discovered, sometimes difficult ways.

Inside-Out and Outside-In

To call myself an “insider” among Montreal’s REC allosexual activists requires some qualification. First, it would be beneficial to the reader to provide a more detailed

account of my own involvement in activism in the city. When I made the decision in 2002 to commit myself to community organizing in Montreal, I focused on two specific organizations/projects: Gay Line, an English language crisis line for allosexual individuals in Quebec; and a community-based project that aimed to develop an "alternative" tour of Montreal's Chinatown in order to expose some of the socio-economic and political issues faced by the local Chinese population throughout its history in the city. I suppose I was drawn to these two in particular because each related to significant aspects of who I was (and still am)—those being, of course, my identification as a gay man and as a person of Chinese heritage.

Following my participation on a panel at Chinese Family Services of Greater Montreal (CFSGM) to discuss the Chinatown project, I was invited by a board member of that organization to assist with a poster project that was being developed to combat heterosexism in local Asian communities. The group behind this project was GLAM. While Gay Line and the Chinatown tour had enabled me to do activism around parts of my identity separately, my participation in the poster project gave me my first opportunity to address issues that I could relate to based on the intersection of those identities. This was significant to me, as I had never thought of my selfhood in such an integrated way until GLAM came along. My interest in intersectionality as a framework for activism was suddenly piqued, and soon I found myself taking on a flurry of responsibilities connected to such activism wherever and whenever I could: I became the coordinator of GLAM in 2004; I joined a committee to organize Out in Colour, a series of community-based conferences focusing on the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality; I helped found and was a co-president of Coalition MultiMundo, which

linked Montreal's REC allosexual community groups and their allies together within a semi-formal political structure; I took on the coordinatorship of Ethnoculture, a not-for-profit organization that hosted an annual event that raised awareness about the concerns of REC allosexual people; and during my tenure as co-president of Coalition MultiMundo, I created a sub-committee that eventually evolved into Agir, an advocacy group for allosexual refugees.

Having been so immersed in this form of activism over several years, I was not only able to see, but also experience some of the challenges faced by activists and community organizers and their organizations in performing their activities and achieving their goals. I also realized that no research had been conducted on activists like me and my friends and colleagues in Montreal as part of either a social or historiographic study; hence, neither I nor any other activists had any body of knowledge from which we could learn and draw solutions. It was for these reasons that I decided to make REC allosexual activism the focus of my dissertation research and to use the life story approach as my method.

Those whom I approached to participate in this project were individuals I knew to varying degrees—fellow activists who, like me, were multiply marginalized in Montreal society due to the intersections of their racial, ethnic, gender and sexual identities. Because of my personal and pre-existing relationships with most of these activists as well as the fact that I was "one of them" and possessed "local knowledge" (Geertz, 1983) about my topic, I believed I would be able to navigate through my research with relative ease. I would not be some outsider without any connection to the people or realm I was studying, using whatever privileges I had or "going native" to

infiltrate their lives, gather information, then use it solely for my own professional advancement. I was approaching this as a project *for* the community, my personal stake in it being, as a long-time, politically-engaged member of that community, the improved capacity to do my activism and, consequently, help people like me. In this sense, I saw myself as a true "insider," as I was on the inside looking in.

Indeed, being an insider does provide numerous advantages for a researcher such as me. Maxine Baca Zinn (1979) suggests that researchers of colour who study their own or other racially-marginalized communities, for example, have a certain way of looking at the world based on their own experiences of abjectivity that enables them to discern angles that outside researchers may not perceive and to gain a deeper sense of trust among the members of those communities, who in turn may then be more open to imparting thicker and denser details about their lives (p. 212). With respect to oral history interviewing specifically, Valerie Yow (1997) observes that the identification of certain traits that the oral historian and storyteller have in common, including race, gender, and class, can influence the relationship between the interviewer and the narrator (p. 72). In my own work, I have noted such connections facilitating a life story interview I had conducted for a previous article (see Wong, 2009). For Anne E. Brodsky and Tahmeena Faryal (2006), these types of connections were especially useful in their research on the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, as they already had an innate understanding of some of the more concealed aspects of Afghan society, including its culture of secrecy (p. 314).

Yet as some scholars have noted, legitimizing insider research in the academy has not always been an easy task. Diane Reay (1996), for instance, notes that "[v]oices

that are informed by insider knowledge of working-class culture rarely inform academic writing” (p. 64). Meanwhile, Zinn (1979) as well as Nancy Naples (1996) point to Robert Merton as one sociologist who has been particularly critical of insider research within Black communities due to what he asserts is its tendency towards ethnocentrism. Indeed, such research has been faulted for its potential for bias arising from the insider-researcher’s subjectivity in the research process and data analysis phase, exemplifying the kind of conundrum that James Clifford (1988) has written about regarding ethnographic authority. Zinn (1979), however, argues that this kind of criticism obscures the fact that minoritized researchers are “trained in the methodological rigors of their disciplines” and, thus, “are subject to the standards imposed by the scientific community” (p. 213) as would be any outsider-researcher.

One of the tools insider-researchers have used to guard against these criticisms is reflexivity. Reay (1996) defines reflexivity as “a continual consideration of the ways in which the researcher’s own social identity and values affect the data gathered and the picture of the social world produced” (p. 60). More generally, Janice L. Ristock and Joan Pennell (1996) refer to this as “self-awareness” (p. 48). Social science disciplines, most notably anthropology and sociology, have seen some of the greatest impact of this approach on their work, as the field researcher and his, her, or Their relationship with the research participants are now as thoroughly scrutinized as the participants and the data collected in both the research process and the interpretation of the data (Halstead, 2001, p. 209). Feminist researchers have been particularly vocal in stressing to researchers—especially male academics—that they be acutely aware of their location in the process (Reay, 1996, p. 61). Researchers of colour such as Bahira Sherif (2001) note that the

same holds true for scholars studying racially minoritized communities. Ultimately, writes Dydia DeLyser (2001), reflexivity leads “[i]nsider researchers explicitly [to] study not just others but also ourselves” (p. 446).

Although reflexivity has made for an excellent safeguard against both biased and essentialist (and essentializing) fieldwork, it has also exposed numerous challenges in doing insider research. Zinn (1979), for example, suggests that for researchers of colour studying people and communities to which they claim membership, there is the potential not only for encountering problems that commonly afflict all researchers in the field, but also for experiencing “dilemmas imposed by their own racial identity” (p. 213). This became clear to Bryan McKinley Brayboy and Donna Deyhle (2000), Native American researchers who employed autobiographic-ethnographic and ethnographic methodologies, respectively, in their research on Native American communities and cultures. In their collaborative reflection on their fieldwork, they confide, “[f]or insiders, whose membership in the group comes with obligations, it is difficult to simply observe”; those who decline to participate in Indigenous communities risk being viewed as “stuck up” (p. 165). Similarly, while conducting research in Egypt, Sherif (2001), a Cairo-born, but U.S.-raised Egyptian-American, found herself “torn between conflicting identities: the American graduate student, the Egyptian daughter, the single woman in her late 20s, and the trained anthropologist who was always observing and aware of the process as if from the outside” (p. 440). Likewise, in his study on the Somali community in Toronto, Abdi M. Kusow (2003) encountered many Somali-Canadians who asked him to project a positive image of their community to the rest of the world. When he was unable to make such a promise, many turned down his interview requests. Experiences

such as these indicate that even when a researcher can claim an insider position in a given community, inherent to that position is an ongoing tension resulting from the analytical "objectivity" that traditional scholarly research demands.

In response to this conundrum, a number of community-engaged researchers have turned to feminist standpoint theories for guidance. Naples (1996), for one, has drawn heavily from such theories in interrogating two particular limitations of discussions around the outsider/insider binary: "the neglect of the interactive processes through which 'insiderness' and 'outsiderness' are constructed and the illusive [*sic*] search for the most objective position from which to assess truth" (p. 101). Dorothy E. Smith (1987, 1989, 1992, 1996, 1997), considered to be one of the first scholars to problematize the positionality of researchers in the social sciences, contends that it is important that women working in the field use their own knowledge as women, "situated in the particularities of the local everyday and everynight world of [their] immediate experience," as the starting point in their research projects (1989, p. 39). Naming this perspective the "standpoint" of women, Smith (1992) sees the operationalizing of this knowledge as a "*method of inquiry*" (author's emphasis) (p. 88) that engages in a form of "practical politics" grounded in the experiential rather than the discursive (p. 89), thereby providing a point of view that in certain circumstances is deemed more reliable (Naples, 1996, p. 101).

Patricia Hill Collins, who began to write about standpoints around the same time as Smith, agrees with this basic definition, but adds her own layer of complexity to it. Focusing on the experiences of Black women in the academy, Collins (1986, 2000/2009) applies an intersectional approach to standpoint theory, noting that there are multiple

social locations from which the intersectional subject views the world—locations marked not only by gender, but also by, for example, race. Informed by an “outsider within” status developed through centuries of invisibility under White rule in North America (1986, p. 514), the standpoint of African American women, according to Collins (2000/2009), is implicitly multiple and heterogeneous; it presents truth as always “partial, situated knowledge” and, thus, never universal (p. 290). An intersectional standpoint, then, produces an alternative epistemology that “challenge[s] all certified knowledge and open[s] up the question of whether what has been taken to be true can stand the test of alternative ways of validating truth” (p. 290). For a REC allosexual researcher such as myself, Collins’ intersectional framing of standpoint theory offers a powerful approach to conducting research among one own.

In contrast to Collins, Smith (1992), who views identity categories as being bound in discourse, situates the standpoint in the body, which is where she sees the “knower” as “actually located,” thus privileging the “ground of knowing” over the knower; from this view, Smith argues, the knower can perceive “the social relations and organization pervading her world but invisible in it” (pp. 91-92). Although Naples (1996) believes that this latter materialist perspective “challenges the false divide between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ research and between so-called ‘objective’ or scientific knowledge and indigenous knowledge” (p. 102), I do not subscribe to Smith’s view that the “actuality” of the body is entirely divorced from the “categories” that discursively define it. To speak of the body in this way is to speak of an experience that is pure and unaffected by the discursive forces acting on it. The “everyday/everynight” world to which Smith refers in her work does not take into account the desire that informs

experience. Disidentifying subjects such as REC allosexuals understand the importance of desire to their understanding of their experiences. Desire is what allows them to look out over the landscape of belonging before them and grasp how it affects their lives and decide how to interact with it. Experience is not only corporeal, then, but it is also social; and in its sociality, we feel it in singular ways. It is sensorial—so much so that, as Marcel Stoetzler and Nira Yuval-Davis (2002) point out, a "situated imagination" is as critical to the understanding of standpoint theory as situated knowledge:

> Imagination is situated; our imaginary horizons are affected by the positioning of our gaze. But, at the same time, it is our imagination that gives our experiences their particular meaning, their categories of reference. Whether it is "borders", "home", "oppression" or "liberation", [*sic*] particular meanings we hold of these concepts are embedded in our situated imaginations. (p. 327)

To position oneself from a particular standpoint, one must not only tap into one's experiences in the body, but also in the mind and heart. The epistemology produced thus becomes not only multi-faceted, but also humane.

In reflecting on my own research process, then, it has been necessary for me to understand how my own location as an insider has not been fixed; in fact, I cannot really speak of location, but of "ever-shifting and permeable location*s*" (my emphasis) (Naples, 1996, p. 84), of fluid positionalities that change not only with each narrator, but within each interview. The knowledge, feelings, and imagination I possess congeal and morph inside me, react contingently from interview to interview, from utterance to utterance, ensuring that my "research status is something that [is] continuously negotiate[d] and locally determine[d]" (Kusow, 2003, p. 597). Given this, it appears that neither "insider" nor "outsider" truly exists in an objective sense; yet, one underlying factor that has received little attention in these discussions of researcher status is

familiarity—familiarity not in the sense of prior knowledge of a community or identity-based connections through race, class, gender, and so on, but with respect to deeper personal relationships. For while my "insider-ness" as a researcher based on racialization, sexuality, and activism is always already contingent, could the same be said of my friendships with my project's participants?

The question then becomes, of course, one of validity.

Friendship and Methodology

Of the 48 narrators interviewed for this project, eight appear here in its final written form. The narratives analyzed were selected first for the quality and richness of their content and for the esteemed profiles of the narrators in the activist community. Moreover, these narrators are as varied in their (dis)identities as one could imagine, though it must be noted that none of them would claim to represent any given identity, for as Gayatri Spivak and Sneja Gunew (1990) remind us, "speaking *as*" (authors' emphasis) (60) an authoritative or "authentic" representative of a community is fraught with hegemonic power (61). The narrators[14] are:

- V, a female-to-male transsexual of Haitian origin, born in Montreal. Activist in REC allosexual arts community;
- Val, a queer woman of mixed Chinese and Eastern European parentage, born and raised in Southern Ontario. Activist in REC allosexual arts community as well as sexual assault and women's reproductive issues;
- Ed, a queer man of Korean birth and heritage, raised in Calgary, Alberta.

[14] Pseudonyms are used for some narrators, as per their wishes.

Activist in REC allosexual arts community and allosexual immigrant and refugee issues;

- Kanwar, a gay man of Sikh Punjabi heritage, born in Laval, Quebec, raised in Montreal. Activist in REC allosexual arts community as well as anti-racist and anti-colonialist arts community, in general.
- Alex, a gay man (at the time of the interview—currently exploring trans identity) of Rwandan birth and heritage, refugee from Rwandan genocide in 1990s. Activist in allosexual Black African-Caribbean community.
- Diane, a Two-Spirited person of mixed French Canadian, Black, and Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk) origins, born and raised in Cornwall, Ontario. Activist in Two-Spirit community as well as same-sex parenting issues.
- Nada, a lesbian of Christian Lebanese birth and heritage, raised in Beirut. Activist in REC allosexual coalition building, arts, and events and allosexual Arab community.
- Jean-Pierre, a gay man of mixed French, Vietnamese, and Chinese origins, born in France, raised in Montreal. Activist in allosexual Asian community.

Prior to the start of the interview process with each of these narrators, I would say that my relationships with them would break down thusly: two very close friends, or those with whom I not only socialized, but held relationships of confidence; two good friends, or those with whom I socialized and made contact on a regular basis; two casual friends, or those whom I saw socially and contacted on a semi-regular basis; and two acquaintances, or those whom I had met only a few times personally or with whom I was connected through social media, specifically Facebook. This, of course, does not

take into account the ways in which these relationships continually evolved during the interview process. What began almost as "blind dates" (Sheftel and Zembrzycki, 2010, p. 191) with those I counted as acquaintances, for example, became friendships by interview's end, while those who started off as casual friends transformed into stronger friends. Furthermore, these categories of friendship are also, in a sense, purely arbitrary; friendships, Lisa M. Tillmann-Healy (2003) surmises, are not bound by obligation as families are (p. 731). Jodie Taylor (2011) adds that "it is clear that the meaning and significance of such a relationship between two people […] is variable and contextual […] determined by varying levels of familiarity, rapport, respect and emotional attachment" (p. 8). Thus, friendship as a concept is fluid and ephemeral; it is not something that can be defined with any fixity.

Indeed, friendship has been the subject of much philosophical debate for millennia. To Confucianists, for example, friendship is defined by the relationship and values between people in the world writ large (Lu, 2010, p. 229) and is "characterized by affection, concern, and trust" that is "voluntary," as well as by elements of joy, understanding, trust (p. 235), and humanness (p. 240). Among the Greeks, Aristotle viewed friendship as fulfilling three archetypal roles—"the pleasurable, the useful, and the good"—while the Romans saw it in primarily political terms, though Cicero believed it to be more of "a moral and intellectual bond" (Smith & Yeo, 2009, pp. 3-4). Miriam Zukas (1993) points to the period between the 16th century and the Victorian era when women's friendships were perceived as "romantic," which turned "companionate" in the 20th century (pp. 74-75).

For her framework of friendship, Tillmann-Healy (2003) relies on William K.

Rawlins' more emotional grounding of friendship, with mutual care and support as well as fun and frivolity marking the relationship (p. 730). Tillmann-Healy further asserts that close friendships contribute to identity formation: "Conceptions of self and other are formed, reinforced, and altered in the context of ongoing relationships" (p. 731). Finally, there are the political benefits that accompany friendship—politics not in the Machiavellian sense, but rather in terms of forming strong, meaningful alliances in the pursuit of social justice (p. 731). This more elaborate and detailed description of friendship supports the development of Tillmann-Healy's work around "friendship as method."

According to Tillmann-Healy (2003), there is much that is similar between friendship and fieldwork, in that both of them are social and involve inserting oneself into communities (p. 732). An amalgam of interpretivism (p. 732), feminist standpoint theory, queer methodologies, and participatory action research (p. 733), friendship as method answers the call "for inquiry that is open, multivoiced, and emotionally rich" (p. 734). When fused with an "insider identity," those who engage in friendship as method become, in Taylor's (2011) words, "intimate insiders," since

> the researcher is working, at the deepest level, within their [*sic*] own "backyard": that is, a contemporary cultural space with which the researcher has regular and ongoing contact; where the researcher's personal relationships are deeply embedded in the field; where one's quotidian interactions and performances of identity are made visible; where the researcher has been and remains a key social actor within the field and thus becomes engaged in a process of self-interpretation to some degree; and where the researcher is privy to undocumented historical knowledge of the people and cultural phenomenon being studied. (p. 9)

Thus, Taylor's construction of "intimate insiders" appears to re-establish the line separating insiders and outsiders in social research, rematerializing the insider status

through friendship.

This paradigm fits aptly with my own situation. As mentioned earlier, I have been deeply entrenched in the REC allosexual activist scene for almost ten years. It has become not only part of my political world, but also my social world; I attend parties thrown by other activists and invite them to my parties, meet them for coffee or a meal or a movie, and go dancing with them at nightclubs, much in the same way Taylor (2011), as a self-identified queer woman, had been invited by friends in Brisbane's queer community to attend illegal warehouse dance parties (p. 12). In my own context, such socializing preceded my dissertation studies, but has also continued during them. People know me in the community; they turn to me for advice, and I to them. We confide in each other, tell each other our secrets, embrace each other in times of happiness and in times of sorrow, and laugh together. We also fight in solidarity alongside each other through common struggles, lend our support to each other's causes, and share resources and ideas. We can express both empathy with and sympathy for each other as friends, activists, and REC allosexuals.

In this respect, the intimate-insider takes Tillmann-Healy's (2003) friendship methodology a step further; in her conceptualization, "[f]riendship as method can bring *us* [as researchers] to a level of understanding and depth of experience we may be unable to reach using only traditional methods" (my emphasis) (p. 737). Yet as a straight woman researching a gay men's softball team, she is "observing *their* interactions" and "get[ting] to know *them* interpersonally and culturally" as well as "giving *them* my compassion and devotion" and "experience[ing] *them* emotionally and spiritually" (my emphasis) (p. 737). In effect, there is still a sense of objectification here, in spite of her

friendships with the participants in her study. This is not to delegitimize this method of research; even if a researcher begins as an outsider to a community, as a friend he or she can be accepted into a community and become a partial insider of sorts and, consequently, still be subject to the "rigorous self-reflexivity" (Pearson, 2001, p. 58) expected in any social research project. However, being *in* and being *of* a community are two different things; without the history of knowledge inscribed in the body of one who has not merely witnessed, but experienced first-hand all the pain, joy, suffering, exhilaration, fury, jubilation, and other emotions and sensations that come with living and breathing a particular existence, the researcher-as-friend will still be faced with disparities between himself or herself and the research participants that can never be overcome.

While for the intimate insider such disparities can never be fully absent, as Taylor (2011) notes, they can be lessened significantly (p. 8), such that it is possible to move from a research relationship defined by *inter*subjectivity, which Alex Gillespie and Flora Cornish (2009) define as "the variety of possible relations *between* people's perspectives" (my emphasis) (p. 19), to one marked by *intra*subjectivity, wherein there is "a *shared investment* in culture, mutual identification and […] a personal history that pre-dates the research engagement" (my emphasis) (Taylor, 2011, p. 8). In the context of the oral history interview, this means that the narrative of the oral historian becomes just as relevant to the project as that of the narrator, for it is very likely that many events mentioned in their respective stories coincide both temporally and spatially, to the extent that the interlocutors may feature prominently in each other's narrative. In other words, the insider status of the oral historian is inseparable from the narrator's life story. Taylor

likens intimate insider research to "autoethnography," since

> [t]he researcher […] is forced to look both outward and inward, to be reflexive and self-conscious in terms of positioning, to be both self-aware and researcher-self-aware and to acknowledge the intertextuality that is a part of both the data gathering and writing processes. (p. 9)

Yet again, the line distinguishing insider and outsider statuses is blurred. Here, though, the research process requires more than simple reflexivity on its own; it involves a turn towards the self—what Taylor calls "self-objectification"—in such a way that the researcher's very insider-ness becomes the focus of scrutiny (p. 16). Such scrutiny, in turn, enables intimate insider researchers to analyze and critique their role in the phenomena or narrative being studied, helping them to avoid "insider myopia" (p. 16).

Intimate insider research, then, provides its own set of checks and balances that are in keeping with those found in insider research while taking friendship into account. While Renato Rosaldo (1993) advises researchers to "work from one position and try to imagine (or consult with others who occupy) the other" (p. 189), the intimate insider is able to dispense with some of that need to "imagine the other," as he or she is already, to a certain degree, in the other's position. Yet the extra layer of self-critique with which the intimate insider engages supports his or her capacity "to gain some distance from the familiar" (Taylor, 2011, p. 16), which is necessary to the development of a multi-dimensional perspective on the friend-participant.

This depth of reflexivity does not prevent other challenges from emerging for the intimate insider, however. I, like Taylor (2011), have worried that the "[e]mpathy and affection" between myself and my friend-participants might have contributed to their participation in my project, in that they may only have agreed to be interviewed by me because they wanted to "please" me (p. 15). Among other potential obstacles, Taylor

also lists: tensions arising from identity politics; perceptions of favouritism in approaching some friends for interviews and not others (p. 17); and distinguishing in memory what friends may have said during "the designated time" of the research process from what was known of them already outside of that time (p. 18). To these I would add the difficulty—and surprise—outlined in the story that introduced this chapter. An extension of this incident was dealing with interpersonal conflicts that did not involve me, but my research participants. As an intimate insider, I had witnessed many a blow-up between my friends in the activist community that often ended in ostensibly irreparable rifts between certain individuals. During my interview sessions with some of these friend-participants, some of these quarrels were often brought up indirectly by the latter, and I would find myself stepping gingerly around the issue so it would not appear that I was taking sides. As I had a reputation for being a mediator in the activist community, the sharing of a life story in a research context was not the appropriate setting for me to be performing this duty.

Another challenge I experienced as an intimate insider was trying to determine how to listen to my friend-participants as they narrated their life stories to me. Although Slim et al. (2006) address the various ways oral historians listen to narrators with respect to type of interview or cultural setting, no mention is made of how the personal relationship between the discussants might affect the interviewer's listening. Because of my involvement in a number of oral history projects in which my relationship to the narrators has varied, I have been able to delineate the specific and distinct ways in which I listen to the respective project participants.

Listening to Strangers

When I began my journey as an oral historian, one of the first interviews I conducted was with Hourig Attarian, a Montreal-based scholar who also used oral history methodology in her work. The purpose of the interview was to explore her life story as an Armenian Canadian and its connection to her artistic and academic work on the Armenian genocide, which would then be included among the 500 narratives being collected for a major oral history initiative at Concordia University titled *Life Stories of Montrealers Displaced by War, Genocide, and Other Human Rights Violations*.[15] Prior to my session with Hourig, I had only conducted one other interview, so I was rather green in comparison to other oral historians in the project.

I had never met Hourig prior to my first interview with her, and thus, aside from some basic information I knew about her through preliminary research, she was a complete stranger to me. When I sat down with her for our initial session, I felt strangely calm. There was none of the angst that one usually has when meeting someone for the first time in what could be considered a formal situation. Usually, the unknown is a source of anxiety for me; the pressures of providing a good impression and representing the project in an appropriate way to someone whom I knew very little about would have ordinarily had me fumbling for words and sweating buckets. Yet Hourig was beyond hospitable with my videographer Elena and me, offering us a veritable feast of snacks

[15] The *Life Stories* project, an initiative of Dr. Steven High, was organized around seven distinct working groups. Four of these groups were grounded in a specific geographic or historic context: Haiti; the Shoah/Holocaust; Cambodia; and Rwanda. Two others were more discipline-based: Education; and Oral History and Performance. The final group, Refugee Youth, was age-focused. For more on the project, please visit http://www.lifestoriesmontreal.ca/.

and putting me at ease with her warm personality. This obviously helped in creating a sense of comfort as I asked the first question.

In terms of listening, however, what was most helpful as the interview progressed was the absence of any shared or common history between Hourig and me. With no wayward or distracting thoughts or assumptions arising from personal knowledge I might have had about Hourig or her community, such as information concerning specific dates or events in her life, I was able to give her my full, undivided attention. In effect, I was able to immerse myself in an act of “deep listening,” which Sheftel and Zembrzycki (2010) define as “listening for meanings, not just facts, and listening in such a way that prompts more profound reflection from the interviewee” (p. 199). Because my mind was clear of epistemological clutter, I was able to think more profoundly about Hourig’s reflections in process and, consequently, ask more contemplative questions in return.

This is not necessarily to say, however, that this ability to listen deeply has been consistent with other oral history interviews I have done with strangers since my sessions with Hourig; sometimes certain conditions, ranging from the banal to the complex, have affected the interview environment. An example of the former would be an interview I conducted with Iranian-Canadian artist Khosro Berahmandi, part of whose interview was situated in his stifling, non-air-conditioned studio on a hot summer’s day, making maintaining focus a challenge for all parties concerned. On the other end of the spectrum was an interview with Tamil performer, writer, and painter Kamala Patpanathan that I had done in her apartment. While Kamala was certainly a warm and congenial interviewee, there was an issue with language between us that made

it difficult not only to understand and communicate with each other with any sense of clarity, but also, more significantly, to ascertain the intent behind the words we were speaking. In the end, the interview was pleasant enough, but failed to move beyond surface details because I was unable to engage with her on a deeper level and, thus, explore her life story in a more substantive way.

Disruptive as some of these circumstances may be, I have generally found them to be more the exception than the rule, irrespective of the fact that they are only external forces exerting pressure on the act of listening, rather than the problem emanating from a more rooted place within either my interviewees or myself. Another session I conducted with Khosro in his cool and airy apartment, for instance, was a much more focused affair, proceeding in the same way as had my interview with Hourig. Another stranger to me, gay Italian-Canadian community organizer Gaspare Borsellino, whom I had recruited for my dissertation research, also provided me with a successful interview experience in this regard, with our sexual orientation the only truly common bond between us. As activists who had been prolific in the gay community during different eras—Gaspare's preceding my entrée into the scene—we had never encountered each other before the interviews took place, thereby making it much easier for me to listen for new information and come from a place of genuine curiosity about his experiences. This is where the pleasure of listening to strangers lies; every word uttered by them is a fresh discovery for interviewers such as me.

One could say, then, that listening to strangers is a very *organic* process. In some ways, it requires very little effort on the part of the interviewer, as there are few barriers beyond surface conditions to obstruct his or her engagement with the narrator. Of

course, this does not discount the fact that interviewees may offer traumatic stories from their lives that can affect the oral historian emotionally and psychologically; from the standpoint of interpersonal relationships with the tellers, however, the pure act of listening is a relatively unencumbered endeavour.

Performing Personal Narratives

In addition to the interview component of the *Life Stories* project, I had also been involved in research creation through a Playback Theatre (PT) troupe called the Living Histories Ensemble (LHE),[16] which was founded to explore, through performance, specific moments in the lives of those involved in the project. Thus, we collaborated with each of the working groups that comprised the project, including those focused on mass atrocities such as the Holocaust as well as those perpetrated in places such as Rwanda, Cambodia, and Haiti, sharing performances that have been devoted to representing their realities as they have experienced them (see Sajnani et al, 2011; Sajnani, Wong, Linds, & Ndejuru, Forthcoming; Sajnani et al, Forthcoming).

Playback Theatre, which was conceived by Jonathan Fox (1994) and developed by Fox and Jo Salas (1996/2002) in the United States in 1975, is an improvisational form of community-engaged theatre that solicits stories related to specific topics from audience members that are then immediately "played back" by troupe members using different performative forms and techniques that are determined by the "Conductor," an individual who functions as an emcee or facilitator between the audience and the actors. These stories are always performed from the perspective of the storyteller, and the performances are grounded in metaphor rather than a literal re-telling. My initiation into

[16] The Living Histories Ensemble was involved with the Oral History and Performance working group.

PT occurred in 2006, when I was recruited by a friend to perform in an ad hoc Playback troupe that was assembled for the opening of the *Accès Asie* Festival, which marks Asian Heritage Month in Montreal. Since then, I have performed in countless shows that have addressed a wide array of issues, including literacy, leadership, and women's rights as well as the diverse concerns of the *Life Stories* working groups.

Having been a practitioner of PT for several years now, I have developed a way of listening that, while often as free of constraints as my approach to oral history interviews with strangers, has some distinct qualities of its own. One significant difference is that the stories audience members tell in a theatrical context tend to be brief and anecdotal in nature, rather than drawn out over several hours like a life story interview. For example, usually the Conductor will begin a show by asking the audience what has drawn them to attend that particular performance, and the response is generally short, such as: "I wanted to discover a new form of theatre" or "I wanted to explore different ways of storytelling." The Conductor may try to coax more details from a given audience member, but often a short, one-sentence answer is enough around which the group can build a performance. Thus, to "play back" the story, we will pick a short form such as a fluid sculpture, whereby the actors use sound and movement to create a visual and aural sculpture composed of their bodies and voices that metaphorically reflects the teller's story. For us as actors, such one-liners or brief anecdotes are easy both to listen to and to interpret performatively, since they are broad enough for us to find our own respective narrative openings.

A second difference is that because the telling is moderated by the Conductor, I have no control as an actor over the questions being asked in the moment, though during

rehearsals before a given performance we, as a troupe, usually discuss the theme of the event to which we have been invited and contribute questions that may potentially be used during the show. Oftentimes, we will even invite a “consultant” from the community for which we will be performing to come to our rehearsal and provide us with some insight into and context around his or her community and the issues that affect it. For one show that was aimed at allosexual refugees and immigrants in Montreal, we invited several members from Agir, a local organization focusing on matters of concern to allosexual asylum seekers and “New Canadians,” to a rehearsal. We asked them to tell us some stories, which we then played back using a few different forms so that they could have an understanding of the kind of theatre we do. Many of the narratives that they shared conveyed their feelings of loneliness and isolation in Montreal. If we had listened properly in that space, we would have understood that the stories that were relevant to them were those about their life in their new land; however, when it came time to perform for the community in a formal show setting, the questions we asked ultimately revolved around their histories prior to coming to Canada. As a consequence, few people were willing to offer their stories, and the show felt rather flat to me in the end. Half way through the performance I realized why we were not connecting with the audience, but there was nothing I could do at that point, lest I disrupt the show. It was important not to distract myself with my epiphany, and so instead I simply continued with the show and followed whatever directions–both expected and unexpected–the Conductor was taking it. I would describe the kind of listening we do in this particular type of situation, then, as having two dimensions: the first revolves around the development of a listening relationship between the theatre

troupe and the community for which we are performing, wherein we, as the former, must grasp, as strongly as possible, the messages that members of the latter are trying to convey to and through us in order to serve them honourably and well; and the second can be understood as a listening relationship that develops between the Conductor and the actors, wherein the latter must stay focused on, pay attention to, and be ready for the former’s instructions at all times, regardless of what other thoughts may intrude because, as the cliché reminds us, “the show must go on.”

The most significant distinction in how I listen as a Playback actor, however, is that as the story is being told, I am not only paying attention to its content, but also searching for specific narrative moments that inspire metaphors that I can bring to life through performance while staying true to the essence of the narrator’s experience. For example, in a show for racialized allosexuels that I performed in with the Montreal Third Space Playback, a troupe I belonged to that preceded the LHE, a woman told a story that expressed her difficulty in figuring out how to support a Moroccan friend of hers who was facing problems with his family because of his transsexuality. The Conductor decided that this story would be better reflected in a longer form, so she asked the teller to assign actors specific roles for the playback; to my own surprise, she chose me to play her friend. Having listened attentively to her story, however, I was able to find a suitable impulse within me that translated into an appropriate metaphor, despite my lack of connection to experiences of transsexuality. I selected a lilac-colored scarf from the rack of scarves we keep at the side of the stage for use as props and slowly pulled it over, under, and around different parts of my body in a flowing, constant motion while standing in place throughout the whole narrative while the other actors performed their

roles around me in response to the performative choice I made. To me, the scarf and the way I used it symbolized the fluidity of the subject’s sexuality as well as the notion that it was an inseparable part of his identity, while the stillness of my feet signified his inability to escape the turmoil around him. Here, again, I can point to two dimensions of listening at work: the first is listening for elements in the teller’s story that I, as an actor, can convert into performance through metaphor, whether it be materially in the form of a prop, physically through movement, verbally through voice, or all of the above mixed together; and the second is listening to the other actors and vice versa so that we are attuned to what each other is doing and to the choices each other is making so that we all may respond in an appropriately performative way–which is the essence of all improv, ultimately. In this context, the relationship between the storyteller and myself and that between the other actors and myself only exists in the time and space of the story’s telling; whether the teller and I and the other actors are strangers or familiars outside of this spatial and temporal frame is irrelevant. Only the here and now of the words being spoken matter; we, as Playback actors, accept them as an offering or a gift, embodying them in a way that respects the teller and his or her history and identity—an act of performative listening.

Interviews with Family

In 2009, I recorded my father’s life story. This was a personal project of mine, as I had just found out that my uncle was dying of cancer. So, faced with my aging father’s own mortality, I thought it was time to preserve his life story for my family—family as method, one could say. The first couple of sessions focused on his early years, including

his birth and upbringing in China and his first couple of decades in Canada. During these initial interviews, I was completely immersed in his story. While I had heard some of his anecdotes before, new pieces of information were being offered that helped expand on some stories while also creating entirely new narratives. In the third session, my own birth entered my father's story, and it was then that I started to become anxious. I began to zero in on the ways in which my father spoke about me, listening for specific comments that would give me hints about how he perceived me or what he thought of me. As we neared the 1990s and the disclosure of my sexuality in his narrative, a feeling of dread began to wash over me; the uncertainty of what he was about to say was unnerving. I tried to convince myself that I had nothing to worry about. When we reached the coming out event in his story, however, my worst fears were realized. All of his negative sentiments about this episode in his—our—life still remained after all of these years and now came pouring out of his mouth for me to hear. What made the situation worse was that he was referring to me in the third person as he spoke, even though I was right there in front of him. Through all of this, I chose to remain silent; I saw myself as the family oral historian during this process, and to interject or try to discuss the matter with my father would have been intrusive and disruptive to the project at hand. I wanted to be, in a word, professional. Thus, I continued to listen to him as all of his hurt and anger filled the air, while my own feelings remained bottled up inside of me. It was an endurance test, one that tied my stomach in knots and constricted all of my nerves. To me, this was no longer a matter of deep listening; it had become, in effect, difficult listening.

Difficult listening occurs when the interviewer is not merely implicated in the

story the interviewee is telling, but is implicated in such a way that it has ramifications for the relationship between the oral historian and the teller outside of the interview. It can lead to the development of a new and unexpected fissure between, for example, a father and son. In that moment, it can make the rest of the interview seem irrelevant, unimportant, and frivolous. When emotion, in a negative and personalized form, rises to the surface, it can bring the entire interview to a halt, at least in a metaphysical sense; the questions may continue to be asked, but the ensuing stories may not be heard. I cannot say if this moment between my father and me marked the limit of my listening; my despair was not such that it debilitated or destroyed me. I am sure that it is possible for me to hear much worse things that can cause irrevocable damage to the heart and soul. That does not mean, however, that what my father said in those few achingly long minutes did not come as a blow to my spirit. As oral historians, we always strive for depth during our interviews, often forgetting that the waters can become difficult—treacherous—and we risk drowning.

My experience of that event has taught me that in certain situations, where there is a shared history of explosively emotional events, where there is a dynamic between the interviewer and interviewee that goes beyond even intimacy, it is important to proceed with caution and also anticipate the potential dangers that lie ahead. In the end, an interview is only an interview; it should not take priority over our own well-being.

Interviews with REC Allosexual Activists

With my dissertation project, yet another challenge presented itself to the way I listened. As an intimate insider, I took part in many of the same activist activities,

attended many of the same events, and worked on many of the same ventures as my friend-participants. Thus, during our interview sessions, I found myself listening for and anticipating stories about some of those activities, events, and ventures at which I was also present. These were memories that I thought were quite critical to the history of the community not because I was there, but because they were moments that demonstrated our solidarity with each other as a community. For example, I expected to hear personal perspectives on the formation of Coalition MultiMundo,[17] which I felt was an important event for all of us. However, when I asked some of the key players in the creation of the Coalition to recount the most significant events in REC allosexual activism, they neglected to mention this episode from our collective past. Since I did not want to affect the course of their interviews by steering them directly to that story, I asked questions such as "Anything else?" in the hope that they would bring it up on their own. As a result, I distracted myself from listening deeply to their interviews from beginning to end, my intimate insider knowledge frequently getting the better of me by filling my head with self-designated historical priorities that may not have been shared by my friend-participants.

In a negative sense, one could dub this a form of "intimate listening"—a way of listening so closely for one's own story or interests to be reflected that one risks

[17] Established in 2006, Coalition MultiMundo brought together allosexual ethnicized and racialized organizations and their allies in Montreal under one umbrella group as a means of providing a more unified political voice. LGBTQ Asians of Montreal (formerly Gays and Lesbians of Montreal, though still using the acronym GLAM), of which I was one of the coordinators at that time, was one of the Coalition's founding members. The Coalition has since disbanded, and a new Coalition is currently in the process of being formed.

overlooking the *teller's* truth as it is being conveyed or even an advantageous opening to further investigation of the topics that interest the interviewer. For my own research, such listening resulted in missed opportunities not only to inquire into other forms of my narrators' engagement with activism and community, but also to delve further into those areas that I had a personal investment in, simply because I adhered too rigidly to some methodological rules of oral history interviewing rather than giving myself the flexibility to explore certain shared areas of history. I was so concerned with my friendships "tainting" my interviews that, in some cases, I neglected the historical significance of those friendships altogether. In other words, I forgot that my relationships with my narrators were just as important to the narratives as any other element of their histories. Thus, some of the interviews I collected now feel less *complete*—at least insofar as the depth of perspectives I was hoping to gather—than they could and should have been.

Intimate insider research is not a methodology without flaws, nor is it even applicable to or appropriate in all research contexts. However, in the case of my dissertation project, it has been a useful tool not only in attempting to put together some sort of coherent—though not necessarily comprehensive—history of REC allosexual activism in Montreal, but also to see my place in it. If my friendships with other activists can be considered texts in themselves, each with their own historical narrative, then those narratives become interwoven with the life stories being told, producing an intertextual narrative that truly speaks to the collaborative effort between me, as the oral historian, and my friend-participant-as-storyteller. Intimate insider research, in other words, is lived ethnography. And yet, in applying this methodology to oral history, one

final question still remains: Where does power fit into the equation?

Troubling Sharing Authority

Frisch (1990) famously coined the term "shared authority" to refer not only to the creation of an egalitarian epistemological space between researchers and participants, "but [also to] a more profound sharing of knowledge*s*, an implicit and sometimes explicit dialogue from very different vantages about the shape, meaning, and implications of history" (my emphasis) (xxii). With respect to oral history specifically, Steven High (2009) notes that this concept recognizes "the dual authority of the oral history interview, comprising the lived experiences of the storyteller and the questioning of the interviewer-researcher" (p. 13). In transforming the adjective "shared" to the gerund "shar*ing*" (my emphasis) (p. 13), however, High and the other editors of *Sharing Authority: Community-University Collaboration in Oral History, Digital Storytelling, and Engaged Scholarship*[18] wish to broaden the meaning of the term and recognize the active processes at work therein. As High (2009) says, "At its best, sharing authority is about much more than speaking to new audiences; it requires the cultivation of trust, the development of collaborative relationships, and shared decision-making" (p. 13).

In the same foregoing publication, I wrote about my attempt to put these principles into practice by conducting an experiment whereby I, as a then-novice oral historian, assumed the role of the interviewee prior to my conducting first oral history interview "in order to experience the full breadth of participation and to add to my knowledge base in this interactive method" (Wong, 2009, pp. 240-241). This exercise helped me "to reflect on [my] own positionality and subjectivity in the oral history

[18] This is the title of a special issue of the *Journal of Canadian Studies* published in 2009.

[interview] process, and to understand that authority is an ever-present issue that needs to be addressed" (p. 255). Yet despite the insight I was able to gain from that experience, I argued that oral history interviewing as I had experienced still fell short of the lofty goals of sharing authority. I felt that the balance of power continued to lie with the interviewer rather than the interviewee, that the interview failed to reach the level of "conversation narrative" of which Ronald J. Grele (1985/1998) speaks (p. 44). Although I suggested some ways to make the interview potentially more conversational (Wong, 2009, p. 256),[19] subsequent experiences in oral history interviewing have shown me just how difficult making conversation can be in an oral history interview. It is easy enough for the interviewer to receive the gift of the narrator's story, but what does he or she have to give in return? This is what I find particularly problematic—that in the interview process, the oral historian acquires so much knowledge about the interviewee without that knowledge being reciprocated. In this respect, the "sharing of knowledges" to which Frisch (1990) refers does not occur. Contemplating this has caused me to wonder if sharing authority in a truly meaningful way might now be, as Lorraine Sitzia (2003) puts it, "an impossible goal" (p. 87).

This dilemma inevitably raises questions around the validity of oral history research. Patti Lather (1986a) maintains that those engaged in postpositivist forms of study need to make an effort to ensure the "trustworthiness of data" (p. 65). This means establishing "a reciprocal relationship between data and theory," such that theory

[19] My suggestions include providing narrators with copies of the interview guide so that they may also "interview" the interviewer and sharing stories from the interviewer's life with the narrators (pp. 256-257).

emerges organically from the data in a way that does not necessarily dispense with a priori theory, but rather keeps the latter open-ended to account for the context of the data or makes use of multiple frameworks to prevent the privileging of one particular theory over another (Lather, 1986b, p. 267). To this end, Lather offers guidelines comprised of four methods: triangulation, which considers the linkages between "multiple *data sources, methods,* and *theoretical schemes*" (author's emphasis) (1986a, p. 67); construct validity, which interrogates the constructedness of theory against "the logic of data" through "[a] *systematized reflexivity*" (author's emphasis) (1986a, p. 67); face validity, which requires the researcher to revisit participants in order to consult them about the "description, emerging analysis, and conclusions" culled from the data (1986b, p. 271); and, borrowing from Brown and Tandom (1978) and Reason and Rowan (1981), catalytic validity, which affirms that the research process is geared towards the conscientization (Freire, 1970/2007) of participants (1986b, p. 272). Researchers who follow these guidelines, Lather (1986b) argues, will see their work transform into praxis through a two-pronged form of reciprocity—that "between researcher and researched and between data and theory" (p. 263)—that results in "emancipatory knowledge" (p. 259). Ultimately, Lather's (1986a) guidelines are intended to underscore the significance of the lived experiences of participants in research projects (p. 76).

While I agree with these guidelines in principle and have, I believe, successfully incorporated some of the methods into my own research project—specifically triangulation and construct validity—there remain some aspects to her concept that I find problematic. First, Lather's (1996b) directive towards reciprocity only considers the ways that the researcher can "help participants understand and change their situations"

(p. 263)—a rather condescending proposition. Certainly, the researcher should not be actively *hindering* conscientization; however, he, she, or They should also not presume that participants are unaware of their situations or do not know how to change it. Yet this is the presumption that Lather appears to be making in warning against reinforcing the "false consciousness" of participants (p. 265). Moreover, she does not address the possibility of the *researcher* also achieving conscientization through the encounter with participants—a true representation of reciprocity, particularly where the intimate insider is concerned.

With respect to face validity, there is the issue of pragmatics. As an intimate insider researcher working on my dissertation, I have found that logistics have been most obstructive in trying to develop the conversations I so eagerly wished to have, let alone revisiting them with the narrators. As Tillmann-Healy (2003) observes, the vagaries of working within an academic structure, especially the temporal and economic constraints, can exert a great deal of pressure on the researcher to make decisions that ultimately do not fulfill the expectations derived from the sharing of authority (p. 740). Indeed, the limited amount of time the university affords me to complete my dissertation effectively prevents me from conducting longer interviews that allow for the incorporation of more interactive conversations into the sessions, particularly when the large number of friend-participants is factored into the process. Moreover, all of my narrators lead very active lives; between work, school, romantic relationships, family time and, of course, activism, it was often difficult to convince them to sit down for one 2-hour session, let alone three or four, or the additional hours required for a return visit *after* the completion of the interviews.

Lather's work, then, presents only a partial solution to the question of validity. Beyond that, there are other difficulties from my project to consider that may affect its validity in the context of shared authority. There were times, for instance, when my friendships with narrators hindered the development of a conversation, as they often felt the need to please me, frequently asking me, "Did I answer your question?" rather than providing me with a more organic response or inquiring about my own thoughts and experiences in relation to the questions I asked. Tillmann-Healy (2003) encountered similar problems in her work with her gay friends, finding that "their connections with me could not be completely disentangled from their decisions" (p. 742). In addition, my own unease in telling my story in a conversational interview has also been an obstacle, with the discomfort arising not from my willingness to tell my story, but from my anxiety over whether or not my friends would be interested in hearing it as well as from the knowledge that many of these interviews would be publicly archived and, thus, sharing my story in every interview would amount to overkill in an archival collection. With these challenges plus those around Lather's work mentioned above, how might I best improve on the validity of my project?

Collins (2000/2009), to my mind, presents the best solution to this problem with her contemplations on the "ethic of caring," which she states is "central to the knowledge validation process" (p. 282). The ethic of caring is composed of three elements: personal expressiveness; emotions; and empathy (pp. 281-282). Personal expressiveness refers to the uniqueness of an individual—a person's singularity, in effect (p. 282). With respect to emotion, Collins specifically means its presence in dialogue, for she says, "Emotion indicates that a speaker believes in the validity of an argument"

(p. 282). Finally, “the capacity for empathy” is important to an ethic of caring because it forms a bond of understanding between the researcher and participant (p. 282). Through an ethic of caring, I, as an intimate insider oral historian, and my friends-participants-as-storytellers become “connected knowers” who “see personality as adding to an individual’s ideas and feel that the personality of each group member enriches a group’s understanding” (p. 283). By combining Collins’ ethic of caring with the more structural facets of Lather’s (1986a, 1986b) guidelines, a powerful mode of validation is produced, one that is multifaceted, dynamic, and intuitive—a caring praxis, as it were, which is particularly effective for intimate insider research in the oral history field.

In this caring praxis, I am able to discern the ways that my project aimed to level any epistemological imbalance between my narrators and me. For one, our shared history ensured that most of them already knew about at least some aspects of my life and my history, and I theirs, thus the power differential was not the same as it would have been had we been strangers to each other prior to entering the interview space. Also, since my activism has been so public, much of my own life story has already been in circulation through my participation in panel discussion, guest lectures, and media interviews. Moreover, the continuation of our friendships after the interviews has provided a mutual support that strengthens our trust in each other and impels us to “do right” by each other; that means taking extra care with the stories they have shared with me and being thorough in considering as many of the theories before me as possible when navigating through the data.

The most important decision I made, however, was to insert intimate parts of my own life story into this dissertation—a form of what David Jackson (1990) refers to as

“autobiography as critical inquiry,” which provides a “shadowy emotional structure” comprised of fragmented memories (p. 5) that interrogates and contests the “dichotomies, divisions, separate categories that split the personal from the social” (p. 11). While this does not imply that sharing authority as I imagined it has been fully achieved, it has enabled me to put myself on a more equal footing with my friend-participants, if not during the interview process, then at least on paper. Through this approach, I endeavour towards “a utopia of plural authorship” (Clifford, 1988, p. 51) through a performance of polyphonic voices, including my own. It is my contention that in this document, with careful reflection and plenty of self-critique, our stories will be able to interact and converse with each other, ultimately contributing to the creation of a significant body of knowledge around REC allosexual activism in Montreal.

Intimate insider research, when supported by a caring praxis, presents a fascinating new way of approaching the life story interview. It adds layers of complexity to an already complex methodology, disrupting the insider/outsider paradigm as well as the conceptualization of friendship as method. It offers the oral historian and the narrator a space that is familiar, secure, and safe. It redefines the “field” by showing it to be “not only [a] site of work and learning, but […] [a] place of personal belonging, comfort, trust, friendship and love” (Taylor, 2011, p. 19). It provides unique ways with which the oral historian can create conversation and come closer to a more realized vision of sharing authority. And it enables me to listen more deeply and carefully to the stories being told, which, in turn, opens up my mind so that I can see how my own story engages with those of my narrators.

Chapter Four

Family Disidentifications

> *The nuclear family has served the rest of us about as well as nuclear weapons.*
>
> Michael Riordon (2001, p. 86)

"Maybe it's time to tell them."

My sister's tone was concerned, yet also calm and matter-of-fact. I knew she was right—much of my stress, my anxiety, my depression could be directly attributed to the fact that I was still keeping this secret from my parents. Each time they made their weekly phone call to me from Mississauga, they would inevitably ask me if I had a girlfriend yet. No, I would tell them, I was focusing all of my attention on my Masters thesis, and besides, there weren't many girls to choose from in Fredericton. The truth was, of course, that I wasn't looking at the girls, anyway, but rather at the boys, or should I say, the men. But I could never tell them that. That's the last thing my Confucian parents would want to hear. Meanwhile, the secret grew in size, stretching out like a boa constrictor, slowly coiling around my soul, crushing it.

"Yeah, I know," I replied. "But I can't tell them over the phone." I wasn't quite sure if this was actually a legitimate reason or if I was just using it as an excuse to back out of doing it.

My sister paused. I could sense her shifting in her chair on the other end of the line. "Would you like me to do it for you?" she asked.

It was my turn to pause. I had to think carefully about this. I knew calling them was out of the question. Could I wait until I came home for Christmas to tell them? That hardly seemed like the appropriate time. More than that, though, I was terrified to unleash my secret to their face. Besides that, I didn't believe I would survive if I held it in much longer.

"Okay," I said.

Up until the night my sister had planned on going to my parents' house to disclose this weighty secret for me, I could only think about what their reaction would be to the news. I went over a number of scenarios in my head, all of them involving shouting and tears, for my father had a ferocious temper and I had always been fearful of his anger. Thus, when the time finally arrived for this event I so dreaded, just a few days before Hallowe'en, I waited by the phone for the call I knew would come, prepared for a screaming match.

At around 10 p.m., the phone rang.

I felt my heart race and the blood drain from my face. I placed my hand on the phone and allowed it to ring a few times before finally picking it up.

"Hello?" I could barely get the word out, expecting my father's furious voice to

begin its barrage of angry invectives. I readied myself to yell back.

"Hello, Son." My father's voice was low, almost quiet. Maybe this was a red herring, a way of lulling me into a false sense of security before truly springing his scorn on me.

"Did . . . Gail talk to you?"

"Yes." Again, his voice sounded barely there. I was taken aback—I had not expected this. Maybe he really wasn't as homophobic as I thought?, I told myself.

Then he continued.

"This is the darkest day of my life," he said, his words drawn out, his tone sombre and tinged with despair. "All I can see is a black hole in front of me . . ."

For the next twenty minutes, my father continued with comments along a similar vein, all wrapped up in his anguish and hopelessness, while I sat silently with the phone receiver pressed against my ear, letting his words hit me like hollow-tipped bullets, but in tortuously slow motion, exploding on contact with my thin skin and burying tiny pieces of shrapnel into my flesh. I did not know how to respond to his despondent reaction. He had caught me with my guard down. If he had been angry, then I could have retorted with my own anger. But depression? What could I say? Then, the final piercing shot.

"I wish you had told me sooner so I wouldn't have invested so much money in you."

* * *

Structuring "Family"

The family unit is a powerful force, whether we frame it as omnipresent or utterly absent in our personal narratives. It can hang above us like a benevolent spectre, lovingly providing us with guidance in the decisions we make and the paths we take throughout our lives. Or it can be an endless thunderstorm, constantly shaking the foundations on which we stand and surrounding us with violent, deafening noise that prevents us from thinking clearly and making wise and constructive choices for ourselves. Or it can be a combination of both, or fall somewhere between the two. However its influence manifests itself, there is no denying that family plays a significant role in one's self-formation.

Historically in the North/West, dominant institutions such as the state and the church have attempted to create a universal construct of the family that has been used to

devise one-size-fits-all policies to address the needs of all families. Such an approach has effaced the roles played by different social, economic, and cultural forces in shaping individual families and highlighting their specific needs, and has led to the structuralization of hegemony both within and without the family unit. For example, Judith Stacey (1990) has noted that in the U.S., “[t]he premodern family among white Colonial Americans,” as an “integrated economic, social, and political unit[,] explicitly subordinated individual to corporate family interests, and women and children to the authority of the household’s patriarchal head” (p. 7). With the advent of modernity and industrial capitalism, class became much more influential in defining what constituted the “American family,” transforming and fixing gender roles with respect to labour and introducing into and privileging within bourgeois middle class family life the concepts of “[l]ove and companionship” and “privacy” as well as lionizing motherhood to the extent that it “came to be exalted as both a natural and demanding vocation” (p. 8). This idealized view of the family has now become so prevalent in the White North/West that it has put pressure on other socio-economic groups to mimic this construction. Thus, in the U.K., according to Carolyn Kay Steedman (1986), “within recent history the model of the bourgeois family has been imposed on working class families, and […] the idea and image of this family has become our way of seeing and understanding all families” (p. 76). The form that this particularly bourgeois notion of family has taken is the nuclear family.

The discursive tyranny of the nuclear family in European and North American society has been such that it has had not only classist and sexist, but racist effects, as well, as Enakshi Dua (1999) argues. In her insightful work in this area in the Canadian

context, Dua, citing Bettina Bradbury (1982), traces the entrenchment of the nuclear family back to the late 18th century, during which time “[t]he family was transformed into a set of relations that specialized in procreation, child rearing, consumption, and affection” (p. 240). Aiding this transformation and subsequent embedment in the Canadian socio-economic and socio-political structure was the Canadian government, which, “through a variety of social welfare and family protection legislation, preserved the concept of the household as a distinct unit” (p. 241). Coinciding with this intervention by state was the work done by social reformers to foist the nuclear family as a necessary object “of bourgeois morality” upon the Canadian public, targeting “the working class, as well as immigrants and First Nations” (p. 241). However, Dua points out that what we in Canada have come to know as the institution of the nuclear family is steeped in colonial Western European ideations of and attitudes about familial relations that are not reflective of the experiences of minoritized populations, and has served either to assimilate—by the French—or to exclude—by the British—such populations (p. 243). In effect, the glorification and regulation of the nuclear family has functioned as a critical tool in the fulfilment of the imagining of the nation as a “racialized nationalist project” (p. 250; see also Berlant, 1997; Balibar, 1988/1991c), wherein the reproductive labour of white women would ensure the continuation of the “white race” (p. 253), while the presence of “alternative familial patterns” (254) linked to non-European immigrant and First Nations cultures and of “fertile” REC women, in particular, would threaten the “racist imperial order” (p. 253). This has resulted in numerous racist policies and pieces of legislation, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act (1923) (Li & Lee, 2005) and various “domestic worker recruitment schemes” (p. 246),

that have throughout history regulated the bodies of REC men and women in such a way that the Canadian nation has been able to profit economically from their labour while simultaneously denying them the right and opportunity to organize and participate in familial relations that do not necessarily conform to the nuclear family model.

The impact on the First Nations is one cogent example of the destruction that the institutionalization of the nuclear family has wrought in Canada. According to Taiaiake Alfred (1999), the First Nations view the family as the root from which their entire social structure emanates: "The clan or family is the basic unit of social organization, and larger forms of organization, from tribe through nation to confederacy, are all predicated on the political autonomy and economic independence of clan units through family-based control of lands and resources" (p. 25). In this context, family is virtually the be-all-and-end-all to the entire functionality and existence of First Nations societies. Breaking up the clan would be tantamount to cultural genocide.

And yet, centuries of European colonialism and imperialism worldwide have done or attempted to do just that. Looking at the First Nations experience in the Canadian historical record, one will find policy after policy that intended to obliterate Native identity by undermining the family unit. Such policies included: establishing the now infamous residential school system, which allowed the government to take Native children forcibly from the homes to live in, be educated at, and work for schools with extremely poor conditions, with the goal of assimilating them to Euro-Canadian culture, far removed from the influence of their families (Miller, 2004, pp. 184-185, 187-188); replacing traditional hereditary-based political structures in First Nations cultures with one based on an elective model (pp. 181, 187); and denying some Aboriginal women

"band membership and reserve residency because of marriage to non-Indians (or non-status Indians), along with their children" (Green, 2001, p. 716), effectively erasing their indigenous heritage because they did not match the definition of "status Indian woman" enshrined in the Indian Act.[20] As colonized peoples, Aboriginals in Canada were viewed by European colonizers as obstructions to the latter's pursuit of land and resources; by instituting policies that intended to break apart family units and the family-based social structures that undergirded entire First Nations cultures, the Euro-Canadian government instigated a destructive process that would have a profound impact on Natives for generations.

Colonialist and imperialist policies have also deleteriously affected families that have immigrated to Canada, particularly those from non-European nations. Ed, one of my narrators, describes some of the difficulties Their family faced in immigrating to Canada from South Korea in the midst of changes to immigration policies by the Canadian government:

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[20] Since the mid-1970s, a number of Aboriginal women have fought either to gain or to regain the status and band membership they were denied due to the Indian Act. Of particular note, Sandra Lovelace, a Maliseet woman who lost her status after marrying a non-Native man, helped spur the Canadian Government in 1985 to amend the Indian Act to account for and recognize situations such as hers (Palmater, 2009, pp. 4-6). Also, Sharon McIvor, an Aboriginal woman who was ineligible to register for status because her Native mother did not have status herself, argued to the British Columbia Supreme Court (BCSC) that the Indian Act discriminated against Indigenous women such her based on her lineage (p. 6). Consequently, the BCSC ruled that the Indian Act violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in this regard; however, gender discrimination in the Indian Act still exists around certain aspects of lineage resulting from generations of Native women who lost their status due to the sexism that had been built into the Act (pp. 7-8).

> *[T]here were Canadian immigration policies that were changing, and my parents were coming in through the sponsorship of my father's sister, and this sort-of way for siblings to come to Canada relatively easily versus now—that policy was changing. And so we, my family, were one of the last group of Koreans to be able to come into Canada under these policies. If [my father] had not come, then my parents would have had to apply independently, which they could have been refused at that point, and in fact, another of my dad's sisters who applied afterwards was denied when they had applied after this point in time.*

Although successful in their immigration application, Ed's family faced an enormous amount of stress with the knowledge that the immigration policy allowing for family reunification might change before they had the chance to set foot on Canadian soil. Moreover, one of Ed's aunts was not so fortunate and, thus, was ultimately unable to be reunited with the rest of her family in Canada. Although for a time immigration laws had opened up to a degree to allow for extended family members to be sponsored by their kin, the Canadian government, ever mindful of its priorities in upholding the nuclear family paradigm, closed that opening to people such as Ed's aunt who did not fit into racialized nation that the Canadian state had imagined. In 2012, the Conservative-led government in Canada changed the immigration policy to emphasize the recruitment of skilled workers—those from whose labour the Canadian nation would profit—over family reunification (see Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). Other family models are still not welcome, it would seem.

Such "other" models include those that would count allosexuals as family members. As a number of queer and gay and lesbian liberation theorists contend, neo-conservatives have metonymically linked a discourse of "family values" with the nuclear family, which has then been deployed to marginalize allosexuals from family life and all the socio-economic and socio-political rights and privileges that come with it. Joan Ariki Varney (2001), for one, asserts, "The new right has promoted family values

using the heterosexual family as a primary image to reinforce heteronormativity” (p. 91). As with REC Others, sexualized and gendered others have been deemed unintelligible to those who champion the nuclear family model, and, again as with REC others, are treated with the same amount of derision and scorn as a result.

Writing in the French context, Louis-Georges Tin (2003/2008) highlights two distinct strands of what he terms “familial homophobia” that exist in contemporary society: “homophobia within the family, and the homophobic usage of the idea of the family” (p. 173). With respect to the latter, Tin points to two particularly salient features that serve to reinforce the discursive power of the nuclear family: the framing of non-normative sexualities as a threat to the family writ large; and “the call to political action, often in response to gay activism” (p. 174-175). Among the tools used to “defend” the traditional conceptualization of the family, according to Tin, are psychoanalysis and anthropology. Tin argues that the former in its Lacanian form—which dictates that “gender difference” forms the structural foundation for “all adult sexuality” as well as “all future personality of the child” (p. 175)—transforms into an ideology that is particularly hostile to non-heteronormative sexualities, especially after being deployed by Christian thinkers such as priest-psychoanalyst Tony Anatrella, who states, “There is only love between a man and a woman because love implies a fundamental otherness” (qtd. in Tin, 2003/2008, p. 175). Social scientists such as Irène Théry, meanwhile, use “‘scientific,’ anthropological ‘evidence’” to make claims about child endangerment in the event of an adoption by a gay couple (Tin, 2003/2008, p. 175). Moreover, as Dua (1999) has indicated, the mere existence of non-normative sexualities has also worked against racialized nationalist projects such as Canada, with eugenicists maintaining that

a host of non-norm sexual “practices,” including homosexuality, would undoubtedly result in “the deterioration of the race” and, thus, the downfall of the nation (p. 252). Over time, then, allosexuality has been attacked from almost every direction by a variety of antagonists who view it as an enormous menace to social stability, the moral order, and the foundations of the state.

With such sentiments concerning the family circulating in the public sphere via other dominant social institutions in the North/West such as the state, the law, education, and the church, the family itself as a private, lived experience has inevitably been affected. Indeed, Kath Weston (1991) observes, defenders of the nuclear family model have long deemed gay and lesbian identification as “a rejection of the ‘family’” (p. 22). Such an association has been propped up by two beliefs, in Weston’s view: that homosexual relationships are characterized by childlessness and a lack of long-term commitment; and that families ultimately dissociate themselves from gay and lesbian kin after the disclosure of their sexualities (p. 22). Embedded in these presuppositions is a presumption that kinship is stubbornly intertwined with biology, reproduction, and genealogy, thereby evacuating any sense of the social from ideations of the family (Schneider, 2004, p. 259). This rationale undergirds the “cultural positioning of gay people [as] outside both law and nature” (Weston, 1991, p. 4), in that, “[c]ollectively, biogenetic attributes are supposed to demarcate kinship as a cultural domain, offering a yardstick for determining who counts as a ‘real’ relative” (p. 35). Hence, the conviction that non-heteronormative sexualities are a menace to “traditional” kinship relations and, by extension, to ethnicity is reified through the affirmation of the family as a heterosexual institution and of gays and lesbians as “incapable of procreation, parenting,

and establishing kinship ties" (p. 25). Viewed in this way, the oppression of allosexuals in the context of family life is justified by those who perpetrate it.

As Weston suggests, ethnic identity can also add a layer of complexity to views on and experiences of kinship and allosexuality. Varney (2001), for example, has highlighted the importance of family among Asian Americans. However, as Dana Y. Takagi (1996) points out,

> [M]any [Asian gays and lesbians] experience the worlds of Asian America and gay America as separate places—emotionally, physically, intellectually. We sustain the separation of these worlds with our folk knowledge about the family-centeredness and supra-homophobic beliefs of ethnic communities. Moreover, it is not just that these communities know so little of one another, but, [*sic*] we frequently take great care to keep those worlds distant from one another. (p. 25)

Specific ethnocultural factors may mitigate such a separation, including non-Northern/Western conceptions of sexual identity that do not adhere to Northern/Western forms (Chan, 1997, p. 241). The schism represented therein is indicative of the racialized assumptions about sexuality found among not only White heterosexuals, but White allosexuals, as well.

With the liberalization of sexuality, particularly in the past twenty years, in the form of legal rights and freedoms gained and the development of more accepting—or, at least, tolerant—attitudes towards the presence of gays and lesbians in Northern/Western society, allosexuals have ostensibly had much to celebrate in the last decade, most notably where the definition and construction of "family" is concerned. Numerous countries, including Canada, as well as several sub-national regions in places such as the United States have legalized same-sex marriages, while many other areas of the world recognize same-sex unions, though not necessarily marriage. Same-sex couples in a number of these countries have also been granted legal rights with respect to adopting

and gaining custody of children.

A by-product of this race for rights is what Jasbir Puar (2007) labels "sexual exceptionalism." Drawing from Giorgio Agamben's (2005) work on "states of exception," whereby governments justify the deployment of their power in extreme and excessive ways by referring to such exertions of force as "exceptional" in the face of crises, Puar (2007) writes that the U.S. nation-state, in its drive to shore up mass support among its citizens for its post-9/11 policies *vis-à-vis* the "war on terror," has recognized and even welcomed "some, though not all or most, homosexual subjects" into the nationalist fold (p. 3). That it is "some, though not all or most" who are invited by the nation-state to "full" citizenship illustrates the form of exceptionalism that is produced; for the exception is not only temporal, in that this moment of acceptance is enjoyed as a "fantasy of […] permanence" (p. 4), but it is also biological. That is, the national homosexual—the "homonationalist"—subject that emerges is bounded by norms of race, gender, and class (p. 9). Recognition is conferred upon the homonationalist subject, then, because the latter mimics, in many ways, the ideal national heterosexual: White, secular (or, if not, Christian), wealthy, and, usually, male. In turn, the exception becomes the rule (p. 11); the homonationalist subject—whose presence is by no means confined only to the United States (see Bilge, 2012; Haritaworn, Tauqir, & Erdem, 2008)—becomes normative, creating a dialectic that separates those homosexuals who are seen to contribute to the nationalist project through their (homo)normativity and those who are seen as non-normative and, thus, innately antagonistic Others. In this view, Puar (2007) says, "[h]omonormativity can be read as a formation complicit with and invited into the biopolitical valorization of life in its inhabitation and reproduction of

heteronormative norms” (p. 9). As seen earlier, such norms include those associated with the Northern/Western model of the nuclear family.

The nuclear family—ever racialized, ever classed, ever heteronormative—represents a privileged status to which the homonationalist subject desperately aspires. As seen earlier in the Canadian context, the nation-state has traditionally placed much value on the nuclear family for its capacity to reproduce the nation in all its normative whiteness. In the belief that the nuclear family holds the key not only to social legitimacy, but greater economic mobility, homonationalist subjects have been dogged in their pursuit of securing the marriage, parenting, and adoption rights that would enable them to form their own nuclear families (Eng, 2010, p. 3). Referring to Heidi J. Nast’s (2002) ironic observation that White gay men have long benefited from capitalism due to the freedom they have historically had from biologically-based familial commitments, Puar (2007) muses that “an aspirant class of wealthy white gay males who can simulate the biopolitical mandate to reproduce and regenerate may actually have it better than their hetero counterparts, perhaps even significantly so” (p. 30). Certainly, the fantasy of “having it all” is a seductive one, and it underscores just how entangled homonationalism is with what David L. Eng (2010) calls “queer liberalism.” Queer liberalism is a form of neoliberalism that emphasizes choice as a key value, “choice” here denoting the freedom of queers not only to marry and bear/adopt children, but also to consume (p. 29-30). By domesticating queerness through commodification and vice versa, queer liberalism allows homonationalist subjects to prove their worthiness as citizens to “the capitalist nation-state” (p. 30). “In this regard,” Eng surmises, “family is not just whom you choose but on whom you choose to spend your money” (p. 30).

By buying wholeheartedly into the values espoused by queer liberalism, homonationalist subjects have finally achieved what they believe is the privileged status of full citizenship in the nation-state. In so doing, they have also set a homonormative standard to which all other queers are likewise expected to aspire. Those perceived to be in opposition or failing to live up to such teleological ambitions are vilified as enemies to the cause and, as a consequence, are subjected to discursive violence. Among the main targets of these attacks are racially and ethnically minoritized communities, which are essentialized as resolutely homophobic, effacing “the workings of economic disparities and the differentiation between cosmopolitan ethnicity and pathological racialization” (Puar, 2007, p. 29). This essentialism hinges on the “unexamined and simplistic racist and ethnophobic assumptions about the lack of sophistication or the cultural and religious backwardness of non-Western/white cultures” (van der Meide, 2002, p. 9).

An egregious instance of the operationalization of these assumptions is the evolution of a discourse known as “Muslim homophobia,” which, according to Jin Haritaworn, Tamsila Tauqir, and Esra Erdem (2008), gay White activists such as Peter Tatchell as well as queer Muslim apologists such as Irshad Manji have cultivated as a threat to sexual liberation. By imagining, then fixing Islam as intrinsically “barbaric,” “uncivilised,” and “pre-modern” (p. 78), Northern/Western anti-homophobia advocates simultaneously reinforce the notion that places such as Europe are “gender-progressive” and “safe haven[s]” for Muslim allosexuals (p. 83). Moreover, creating a crisis emanating from “Muslim homophobia” also provides the nation-state with ammunition to continue and even bolster “repressive anti-terror measures, attacks on nationality,

immigration and educational rights, and the shocking dismantling of civil liberties" (pp. 78-79). In short, the instrumentalization of homonationalist privilege through the discursive regulation of racially and ethnically minoritized bodies is the very epitome of "gay imperialism" (Haritaworn, Tauqir, & Erdem, 2008). Because they now stand among the elites of society, homonationalist subjects can deploy their exceptionalism to disparage and belittle REC subjects with impunity, effectively casting them out (Razack, 2008) of citizenship. The idealized—and legitimized—family thus becomes the domain solely of the White, wealthy, secular hetero/homo, exemplifying what Eng (2010) terms "the racialization of intimacy."

For many REC allosexuals, the racism arising from homonationalist discourse is experienced personally, as their own communities are often in the line of fire. Indeed, it is one of a number of determinants that could affect the well-being of the REC allosexual subject, all of which position him or her or Them at the epicentre of racist, misogynist, classist, heteronormative, and now homonormative psychic violence (see Greene, 1997, p. 218). Taking all these factors into account, it is possible to see how various discourses of the family intersect and interlock to complicate the lives of REC allosexuals even before entering into any process of "coming out." As one may have discerned from my story that opened this chapter, my headspace prior to the unmasking of my gay identity to my father was fraught with emotions, which were shaped by the knowledge that his expectations of me were predominantly influenced by his Confucian Chinese ideals[21] dictating that I, as his only son, must continue the patrilineal line by

[21] According to Jennifer Q. Zhang (2011), "Confucian doctrines do not speak directly on the subject of same-sex love. Instead, Confucian teachings were focused on the family as the basic unit of the state.

marrying a Chinese woman and bearing children—an expectation that I had been continuously reminded of since I can remember. It was my familial duty to do so.

A number of my narrators similarly express the complexity of the pressure they feel were exerted on them by these intersecting and interlocking discourses of family and culture as they were growing up. For example, Ed states,

> *I think ideally they wanted me to marry another Korean person and have kids and be either a doctor, lawyer or engineer. I think that was sort of their dream for me. When I say "person," I mean woman, Korean woman—so being in a heterosexual relationship.*

Likewise, Kanwar emphasizes the importance of marriage in Punjabi culture:

> *The Punjabi concept is very conventional—you know, get married...depending on what religion you belong to because Punjab spans India and Pakistan […]. But in India, it's very much get married, have kids.*

Kanwar also speaks of the culturally-specific normativizing strategies his parents employed when his behaviour did not appear to adhere to acceptable codes of gender:

> *They would often put me in religious camps to toughen me up or have me play with more boys—bad move not to sit with the girls all the time, like that, right?*

Meanwhile, Val mentions her fear of disclosing her queer identity to her mother's side of the family in Southeast Asia, despite her otherwise comfortable self-acceptance of her gender identity and sexuality:

> *[My sexuality] didn't really affect my belonging in queer communities as much as it did in racialized communities; and especially because of the religious differences between myself and my Chinese side of the family, [which] really*

The emphasis of 'self' was placed on the kin-family relationship an individual held, not on the individual being. Marriages were formed in a way to strengthen these kinship ties amongst different groups [and were] not particularly focused on individual desire. The offspring's primary responsibility was to respect their elders and continue these lineage lines, the concept of marriage correlated with reproduction[,] not sexuality" (p. 11; see also Zhou, 2006, pp. 489-490).

> *threatened my [Southeast Asian side, I was] very scared about what that meant. I actually haven't been back to [Southeast Asia] since I came to embrace this part of my identity.*

Similarly, Jean-Pierre restrained himself from divulging his sexuality to the family his father left behind in China when he fled the Maoist regime:

> *They freak out when they start seeing you dressing your hair. It's like, "Is he a girl? Guys don't do that." [...] And they asked me all kinds of questions, like if I was going to get married, do I have a girlfriend . . . they would present me a girl.*

To be immersed, as Val, Kanwar, Jean-Pierre, and Ed were and have been, in both REC and Euro-Canadian cultures since childhood is to navigate the often tricky terrain of familial discourses that push REC allosexual subjects and their gender performances beyond the realm of "possibility" (to play off Gayatri Gopinath's [2005] theorization of "impossibility"[22]) and, thus, acceptability. The terrain of the family becomes even more unpredictable, however, after a REC allosexual comes out of the closet.

Epistemologies of the Allosexual and the Family

The closet is a symbol that has become irrevocably linked with allosexuality and the secrecy around it for those who have yet to disclose their non-heteronormative sexualities to various kinds of publics, including their families. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990/2008) refers to this act of "hiding" one's sexual being in the small, dark, figurative space of the closet as a "performance," which is "initiated as such by the speech act of a silence—not a particular silence, but a silence that accrues particularity by fits and starts,

[22] Gopinath's (2005) conceptualization of "impossibility" refers to "the unthinkability of a queer female subject position within various mappings of nation and diaspora" (p. 15).

in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it” (p. 3). In the discourse of the Northern/Western nuclear family, coming out is constituted as a challenge to traditional notions of kinship based on “the unconditional love and enduring solidarity commonly understood […] to characterize blood ties” (Weston, 1991, pp. 43-44). Reactions of family members will run the gamut from outright rejection to absolute acceptance and will often be emotionally-charged endeavours. “In this sense,” Weston says, “coming out to biological kin produces a discourse destined to reveal ‘the truth’ not merely of the self, but of a person’s kinship relations” (p. 44).

It is very possible that “the truth” that emerges here is one born of a dramatic “collision” (Pidduck, 2009, p. 442) of performances—between that of the revelation of one’s allosexuality and that of the family as defined and bound by blood, honour, genealogy, and history. How dramatic that collision will be is contingent on a variety of factors, which may include how “close” or “distant” the individual coming out is regarding one’s family (Weston, 1991, p. 52). Moreover, connected to this dialectic of “closeness” and “distance” are the notions of dependency and consequence. According to Elizabeth Freeman (2007),

> Kinship delineates the caretaking activities that have not been socialized as services for purchase or as state entitlements—or, more accurately, the kinds of nurture to which, despite their having been socialized so that they are available outside the household, people have unequal access. Kinship is private, unevenly distributed social security. (p. 298)

For many of us, the family as an established institution provides us with a bedrock of both material and emotional support (Weston, 1991, p. 5). When that institution is confronted by something as potentially unintelligible to it as the revelation of a kin member’s non-heteronormative sexuality, then there is a risk that that foundation of

bedrock will disintegrate under that individual’s feet. This is why researchers such as Althea Smith (1997) have characterised the coming out process “as a time of reckoning with losses” (p. 280).

A number of factors, of course, may condition the severity of the impact on the newly-unveiled allosexual, or at the very least be determinants in whether or not that unveiling happens at all (see Weston, 1991, pp. 56-61). Sara Ahmed (2004) points out that “queer subjects occupy very different places within the social order” and, thus, “what might feel necessary for some, could be impossible for others” (p. 153). While “coming out” and “being out” and the fantasy of allosexual visibility inherent in such performances have assumed a political dimension in the past few decades (see Bernstein and Reimann, 2001; Ahmed, 2004), most of the research on the topic has been focused on a particular kind of subject; that is, according to Althea Smith (1997), “White or White-identified lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals, for whom individualism, independent identity, and separation from family of origin are important parts of growing up” (p. 281). This is not to say that the experiences of all non-White allosexuals run counter to those allosexuals who identify as White or that even such an understanding of White allosexual experience is reflective of all White allosexuals; however, the privileging of allosexual experience according to norms of Whiteness masks important racial, ethnic, class, religious, and gender differences, among others, that must be given consideration in their own specific contexts.

An emerging body of research and theorizing by and about REC allosexuals has attempted to highlight some of these contextual differences. For example, some Black allosexual scholars in the U.S. and Canada have pointed to the role of Christianity in

maintaining homophobic values within Black families. Jamaican Canadian author Makeda Silvera (1991) writes,

> Our foreparents gained access to literacy through the Bible when they were being indoctrinated by missionaries. It provided powerful and ancient stories of strength, endurance and hope which reflected their own fight against oppression. This book has been so powerful that it continues to bind our lives with its racism and misogyny. Thus, the importance the Bible plays in Afro-Caribbean culture must be recognised in order to understand the historical and political context for the invisibility of lesbians. (p. 16; see also Gomez and Smith, 1991; Bennett and Battle, 2001; Clarke, 1983/2000; Crichlow, 2001)

Meanwhile, Chicano queer theorist Lionel Cantú (2001) details the specific way that sexual identity is constructed in Mexican culture and how it affected his research participants in their day-to-day familial life before immigrating to the U.S.:

> [T]he relationship of homosexuality to the feminine is more complex than a synonymous equation implies. Homosexuality is not only the opposite of masculinity, it is a corruption of it, and unnatural form that by virtue of its transgression of the binary male/female order poses a threat that must be contained or controlled. (p. 120; see also Moraga, 1983/2000; Anzaldúa, 1999)

And Asian allosexual researchers and thinkers have spoken of the various issues in communication that arise with respect to coming out in Asian families (Yep, Lovaas, and Ho, 2001; Chan, 1997; Wat, 1996). In addition, a number of writers across a range of cultures have made mention of allosexuality being viewed as a "Western" (Varney, 2001; Wat, 1996) or a "White" (Clarke, 1983/2000; Crichlow, 2001; Silvera, 1991) phenomenon, with several referring to heterosexist fear and/or disappointment with respect to the ramifications for the reproduction of the race or ethnicity as embodied by the family (Anzaldúa, 1999; Moraga, 1983/2000; Greene, 1997; Clarke, 1983/2000).

My own story exemplifies this latter facet of the coming out experience. Among the many things my father said to me in my phone conversation with him after my planned outing by my sister was "There are no gay people in China." Moreover, as

mentioned earlier, I was the only son out of five children, and consequently it was my filial duty to produce grandchildren—a grand*son*, at the very least—to guarantee the continuation of the Wong bloodline. In this respect, his final line to me before our phone conversation ended is very telling; in my father's eyes, I was an investment, and when I was unable to make good on that investment for him, he felt as if he had lost all of his life savings.

Ed, too, had an experience of coming out that revolved around a threat of material loss, though the threat was directed more towards Them:

> *I knew that I had to move out because I knew that my parents had the capacity to disown me, and I didn't want to be in a situation where I was living at home and then they were kicking me out versus me having left already and then telling them, and me not having to deal with this economic question of where I was going to live.*

Ed's as well as my story demonstrate the materiality of kinship through blood at its most pronounced, throwing into sharp relief what Cantú (2001) has termed the "queer political economy" of REC allosexual family relations, whereby there is an "economic liability that [is] derived from not creating a heteronormative family unit" (p. 131). For Ed, the repercussions were the threat of losing Their home, while for me, it was the painful discovery of my father's view of me.

Other REC allosexual community activists and organisers I interviewed also frame the less positive aspects of their coming out experiences in more culturally-specific ways. Of her parents' response to her partner, Nada says,

> *My parents here and my parents in Lebanon are different people, because in Lebanon you have the society, right? You have what the neighbours are going to say, "Oh no!" and all that, that you don't really have here. So we felt that every time, especially with my mom. It was ups and downs all the time with [my partner].*

Alex remembers asking his mother when he was an adolescent in Kigali about a song he had heard on the radio:

> *It was becoming clearer and clearer since I was 14 [that I was interested in men], and that's the period that I asked my mom about that—not telling her that I'm gay, but asking her about men who love men because of that song […] "Est-ce une maladie ordinaire / un garçon qui aime un garcon?" And she said, "No, that's a problem of White people. We don't have that in our country." And I wanted to tell her that I feel the same, but I have to hide it.*

Later, following his reunion with her after he had been living in Canada for several years, Alex divulged his sexuality to his mother. Like Nada, he contextualizes his mother's reaction in diasporic terms:

> *[My mother] thought I was influenced by Canadians because I was from here by then. She asked me a lot of questions; she thought maybe I would be sad my whole life, that my life would be very tough. She thought that it was my own decision, that it was a choice, that I had been brainwashed. We spent three years not talking about that.*

Diane, meanwhile, speaks of the antagonism between Them and Their religious brother arising from Their allosexuality:

> *I have a brother who is a minister in a very right-wing church […]. He would nag my parents about getting me to shut up, or "Can you at least tell her not to be so obvious?" Needless to say, we don't have much of a relationship.*

These comments from my narrators reflect some of the culturally-specific conditions that marked their experiences of coming out to and being out with their families in rather negative ways. For Nada and Alex, it was an issue of diasporic context, whereby the former's parents reacted differently depending on if they were in Lebanon or in Montreal, while the latter's mother believed that same-sex love was "a problem of White people" and that spending time in Canada had "made" Alex gay. On the other hand, for Diane it was an issue of dealing with neo-Conservative forms of Christianity that had been absorbed by Their kin through histories of colonialism (see Ryan,

Brotman, Baradaran, & Lee, 2008).

While the outcomes of these stories appear to be negative, however, they do not necessarily tell the whole story, and even if they did, they should not be held up as representative and authentic examples of the REC allosexual experience of coming out to and being out with kin. As Wayne van der Meide (2002) argues, "Whether GLBT people of colour 'come out' or not, racism invariably precedes heterosexism as a source of oppression" (p. 9). Moreover, Marlon B. Ross (2005) exposes the racialised nature of the closet altogether, stating,

> We can say with some confidence that gender of object choice and the closet paradigm arise as the "ubiquitous"—that is, the global—definition of sexual orientation simply because of the political, economic, and cultural dominance of the West globally. Nonetheless, even within the West, and even under the discursive dominance of the closet paradigm, other ways of identifying persons engaged in intragender attractions beyond the closet binary have thrived from the turn of the nineteenth century to the present. (p. 169)

Notwithstanding his neglect of the allosexual practices among Indigenous peoples that long preceded the European colonization of North America, Ross makes a valid point; the closet is a highly contentious symbol, and the performance, recognition, and treatment of sexual identities is very different in many cultures. Omar Minwalla, B. R. Simon Rosser, Jamie Feldman, and Christine Varga (2005), for example, observe that a number of their gay Muslim immigrant interviewees "had some initial resistance to, and difficulty with, the Western process of constructing a gay identity. Particularly difficult was understanding and accepting the Western practice of putting labels on homo-social expression" (p. 120; see also Massad, 2002; El-Rouayheb, 2005). In her article detailing her interviews with Asian parents of gay and lesbian children, Alice Hom (1996) notes that some of her subjects were aware of non-heterosexual sexualities around them as

they were growing up, and may even have engaged in some behaviour in their country of origin that may be considered "gay" in a Northern/Western context (p. 39).

Non-heteronormative sexualities, then, are highly contingent, and are performed in ways that often veer away from—or even dispense with altogether—the "epistemology of the closet," to borrow from Sedgwick (1990/2008), in its known and recognized configuration among mainstream, White, Euro-North American allosexuals. This ability to disidentify with and disrupt the "coming out" model as it has been constructed by the hegemon, in turn, provides a great deal of flexibility for some REC allosexual individuals to express their sexual and gender identities within the family structure without necessarily worrying about the consequences, creating new epistemologies in space and time. For example, in her research on lesbian, bisexual, and queer Latina women, Katie Acosta (2010) found that to gain acceptance, some of her participants used silence strategically, in that their sexual nonconformity was never named or directly acknowledged by them or their family members, thereby giving the former the freedom to live with their "open secret" (Zavella, 1997, qtd. in Acosta, 2010) while allowing the latter "to avoid shame in their communities" (Acosta, 2010).

Some of the REC allosexual community activists and organisers I interviewed also demonstrate how they and their families disidentified with the racist assumptions that painted their cultures of origin as always already heterosexist and/or their familial relationships as always already strained. For instance, although Kanwar earlier referred to Punjabi culture as heterosexist, he states that the Sikh perspective is completely different:

> *It's like this ideal of family—have a family . . . that's the Sikh [attitude]—not procreate your brains out—not like that. But family's important. […] I get mad*

> *ignorant questions, like "Does your family know [you're gay]?" Yeah, my family knows. I'm Sikh! Not that many Sikhs divulge to their families, but if you knew that I was Sikh, which some people do, you would know that my religion says nothing about homosexuality. […] And I do say, "Yeah, my family knows! They love me to pieces!"*

Jean-Pierre tells of how the response to his coming out by his mother was one of an utter lack of surprise. Consequently,

> *I became very open [with her]. We'd talk about my sexuality. I'd just go out, and I told her where I'd go out, and she knew where I was going. I wouldn't go out to a heterosexual bar; she knew I was gay and I would go out.*

Other narrators made note of the changes in their parents' attitudes over time. Nada, for one, was shocked to the point of disbelief by how her parents managed to come around to something resembling acceptance on her last trip home, though she attributes part of that change to her siblings:

> *I was surprised because at the end of the trip, my mom and dad took in [my partner] every day at home. I think my sister and my brother [are] playing a huge and amazing role with that. […] But what I love about my parents is that they will never ever stop looking at me as their daughter, even if I'm not doing the right thing for them. So whenever I need help, they're here. Like, in [my film] project […] we were in Lebanon, we had no money, and my dad offered us everything—to me and to [my partner]. We'll go do the groceries and we'll also buy stuff for [my partner] for her place […]. And the 10-15 last days when my mom came back [from] Montreal, it was great between [her and my partner]. Even [my partner] was surprised. So we're like, "When are the dominoes going to [fall]," you know?*

Nada also explains how, unlike that of Diane's brother, her parents' religious faith might actually have helped soften their reaction to her lesbianism:

> *I think that religion is giving them more hope. I think they would have been more violent if they were not religious. I think that because they're religious, they're still around me. Because they're religious, they're still behind me. If they were not religious, maybe they would have cut everything with me. I don't know. But I think that their plans is in their beliefs.*

Alex's mother, who was also very religious, also had a change of heart after

paying him a visit during the inaugural Outgames in Montreal in 2006:

> *I remember it was during the time they were talking about André Boisclair who wanted to become the [Premier of Quebec], and he was gay, and she was really surprised; she could not imagine that someone can be gay and get up [to] that high point of being. So those, I think, really helped for her to understand.*

Val's mother changed her attitude, as well, after years of tension with her daughter over the latter's coming out as well as her activism and life decisions, in general. A few months after a heart-to-heart talk with her mother in which they both arrived at an understanding over Val's sexual difference and her mother's abusive behaviour towards her as a consequence of that difference, Val says that their relationship was put to the test when one of her mother's brothers sent out a homophobic rant to the whole family via email:

> *I wrote an email debunking a lot of this stuff that my uncle was saying, and I sent it to my entire family […] and then my mum sent out a one-line email saying, "I completely agree with and support everything [Val] wrote." […] And then [my] uncle wrote back, "Freedom of speech!" kind-of shit […]. My mum wrote back a fucking paragraph to this guy! She started it off—and I will never forget this sentence—"You have no right of depriving anyone of their human rights because you think that they're 'different'"—and the fact that she put "different" in quotation marks was questioning the very identification of queers as different. And I was like, "Oh my God! My mother has been listening to me all these years! Through all of those fights that we'd been having over queer issues, she's been hearing me!" And then she basically, throughout the entire paragraph, argued for queer rights, but in her own words, with also a Catholic twist […] so not only has she been hearing me, but she's been thinking about it, and assimilating it into her own world view and in her own terms and her own way of thinking.*

In addition to her mother's 180-degree turnaround, what is interesting is that Val has still been able to maintain a loving relationship with her uncle in spite of his homophobic bigotry.

Diane and Their partner had a similar, though somewhat inverse relationship with the latter's grandmother, who, despite being Christian and heterosexist, also

acknowledged the existence of Two-Spiritedness to a degree:

> *I remember we had a conversation about a word we had heard which meant "different" or "somebody who thinks differently." And she really went into it and talked about it a lot. She identified as being Catholic and anti-gay, but at the same time made that connection with the language: "Yes, there always were individuals who were different"—that sort of thing.*

And while Their parents have not necessarily arrived at the point where they feel they can accept Their allosexuality in a way that would be recognisable to the Eurocentric eye, Ed explains that They feel comfortable enough in Their own skin now to be able to skirt around that subject for the sake of Their relationship with Their parents, and in so doing, has seen Their bond with them improve:

> *I think that piece has been really important for me to be able to build a stronger relationship with my parents, and in a very ironic way being able to do that actually, I think, is helping them to better accept me, and it's happening in a very non-spoken way, so it's hard to evaluate. […] That's an important thing to acknowledge, even if it's hard to identify.*

Elements of my own relationship with my family with regards to my allosexuality overlap thematically with those of my narrators in a variety of ways. As with Ed, there has been, following my coming out, an unspokenness that has existed between my parents and me that has allowed us to maintain familial ties. And like Nada, my siblings acted as a buffer in those moments of tension arising from my allosexual identity that have surfaced from time to time.

By disidentifying with the logic of the closet and the coming out process that is inevitably entwined with it, I and some of my fellow REC allosexual community activists and organisers as well as our respective kin have found ways to make peace and co-exist with each other in ways that circumscribe racist assumptions about REC families and their ostensibly phobic perceptions of allosexuality. Some narrators, such as

Kanwar and Diane, have acceptance of allosexual identities—or, at least, a neutral opinion of them—built into their heritage cultures and religions. Others, such as Ed, Val, and I and our respective families, have used various communication strategies to negotiate our relationships in meaningful and impactful ways. And for narrators such as Jean-Pierre, Nada, and Alex, it was only a matter of time and exposure that would eventually transform their families' perspectives on allosexuality. The discourse of "out-ness," then, like any other discourse, is, in the Foucauldian sense, unfixed, in a constant state of flux. In other words, there is not merely one way of "being in the closet" or "being out" with one's kin, as the dominant episteme would have us believe; in fact, there might not be a closet from which to "come out" of at all. Indeed, perhaps even the very concept of kinship should be questioned, as its grounding in biology in Northern-Western society has concealed other important ways in which family has been and can be constructed, including by allosexuals.

De-structuring "Family"

Almost a half-century ago, a number of sociologists and anthropologists began to take a closer look at kinship and how it was constructed, coming to the conclusion that biology was but only one way with which familial ties were created and, thus, social models based on genealogy were not necessarily the best tools of analysis. Pierre Bourdieu (1972/1977), for example, made a distinction between "official kin" and "practical kin," stating,

> As soon as we ask explicitly about the *functions* of kin relationships, or more bluntly, about the usefulness of kinsmen […] we cannot fail to notice that those uses of kinship which may be called genealogical are reserved for official situations in which they serve the function of ordering the social world and of

> legitimating that order. In this respect they differ from the other kinds of practical use made of kin relationships, which are a particular case of the utilization of *connections*. (author's emphasis) (p. 34)

Moreover, he adds,

> To treat kin relationships as something people *make*, and with which they *do* something […] is radically to question the implicit theory of practice which causes the anthropological tradition to see kin relationships "in the form of an object or an intuition," as Marx puts it, rather than in the form of the practices which produce, reproduce, and use them by reference to necessarily practical functions. (author's emphasis) (p. 36)

Bourdieu, then, perceives the family not as a social entity that is predetermined by genealogy, but rather as a thing that is created and performed between individuals to achieve specific ends. In this sense, kinship is inherently teleological.

Like Bourdieu, Schneider (2004) critiques the weight that anthropologists have traditionally placed on genealogy in their analyses of kinship, arguing that it is impossible for researchers truly to understand how kinship functions in a given culture because their "own culture always remains the base-line for all other questions and comparisons" (p. 268). In making assumptions about a culture through the lens of their own experiences, anthropologists neglect the fact that "many aspects of culture are unconscious and are not part of an explicit scheme of things" (p. 268). Hence, to Schneider, it is impossible to conduct an analysis of a social group based on conventional notions of kinship because ultimately, he remarks, "I could see that there was no such thing as 'kinship,' except as it existed as a set of *a priori* theoretical assumptions in the mind of the anthropologist" (p. 270).

Feminist social scientists have taken the denaturalisation of biological kinship even further. Sylvia Junko Yanagisako and Jane Fishburne Collier (2004) speak out against analyses that universalise and entrench dichotomies that mark gender roles—in

particular as it pertains to reproduction—within a society. Like Schneider (2004), they question the ways in which anthropology as a field has disciplined gender roles in accordance with European and North American constructs of such roles and, through anthropologists in the field, applied these constructs to the cultural objects of their study. They further argue that any culture must be observed as a "social whole" and situated within its specific spatial and temporal context. As Yanagisako and Collier (2004) state, "[O]ur problem of continually rediscovering gendered categories can be overcome by calling into question the universality of our cultural assumptions about the difference between males and females" (p. 290).

Taking their cue from feminist anthropologists such as Yanagisako and Collier (2004), allosexual theorists have also placed the family under the microscope and picked away at its constructedness. Long "excluded from the realm of kinship" (Hayden, 2004, p. 379), allosexual thinkers have examined the ways that nonheteronormative sexualities challenge the "Oedipal frame" (Halberstam, 2007, p. 317) and "the privatized-nuclear family, contradicting the sexual dimorphism upon which the ideal family is based" (Bernstein and Reimann, 2001, p. 5). Weston's (1991) work has been especially key to this movement. By introducing the concept of "chosen families," Weston reveals the potential of kinship to be inclusive of allosexual bonds while detaching them from the reproductive imperative of the nuclear family. As she asserts, "Rather than being organized through marriage and childrearing, most chosen families are characterized by fluid boundaries, eclectic composition, and relatively little symbolic differentiation between erotic and nonerotic ties" (p. 206). In this sense, Weston's articulation of chosen kin is marked by its "creativity" (Hayden, 2004; Carsten, 2004) and is representative of

what Stacey (1990) calls "the postmodern family" and what Carsten (2000) refers to as a "culture of relatedness."

Some of my narrators' views on and practices of family resonate with this recent theoretical shift in familialism. A few, such as Ed, refer specifically to "families of choice" in their definitions of family:

> *There's family that you're born with and there's the family that you choose, so I feel like I've developed a family of people that I get a lot of emotional support from, so people I feel that I can talk with. There's not one person; I don't have a best friend. […] I don't know what it is, but there are certain people that I've cried to, that I've barely spent time with them, but I just trust them. Who knows where that's coming from? […] There's other friendships that I have that I consider family that I feel very close to because of different shared experiences and conversations that I've had [with them].*

V also uses similar terms around choice to describe his views on family:

> *I find there are different sorts of family. […] I think you have the family where you're born, you have the family that adopts you, and you have your chosen family where [there are] very close people that you love as much as your own flesh and blood.*

Val, too, frames her definition of family as a dialectic between blood and choice:

> *I think it's anyone you love enough that you would put them before yourself when push comes to shove, and so I wouldn't just say it's blood. I have a lot of chosen family members because everyone's in [Southeast Asia] or [Eastern Europe], so if I didn't have chosen family here I would have no family, really.*

Other REC allosexual community activists and organisers I interviewed use less direct language than those above in describing their views on family. While Diane mentions biological family, for example, They do not explicitly use any derivation of the word "choice" in Their definition of family:

> *I like to think of family in a broader term, and I try to avoid "family of origin" and things of that sort because of my own experience. […] A family is a group or people who care about each other, who help each other, who are there for each other. And I've learned by also being different that the "made-up" families that you have—the aunties and the uncles and cousins and brothers and sisters that*

> *you find in the community—sometimes are stronger family members than your own biological family. […] [This is] very much a Native perspective, I think, in that the whole concept of the extended family or those around you—the circle, the community—is your family, as well.*

Alex, like Diane, centres on the importance of care and emotional bonds in his definition of family:

> *I feel that everywhere there is love, there is family, because when I talk about love […] I see at least two people together, and two people who show love—for me, it's the beginning of a family. […] So for me love is really the centre of everything and that love, I felt it since I was born and when I was growing up, and [it is] something I try to give unconditionally.*

Likewise, Kanwar implies both biological and chosen forms of kinship in his response:

> *If you've experienced drama with somebody and you're still there with them, that's family, you know? It's hard to cut off ties completely; sometimes family do that for a short while. But if you come out of that, that's family; it's like, you've had drama, you've had positive and negative experiences together, and you're still there together. That's family. Obviously my immediate family [is my family]. I consider one of my best friends family. He's just been there for me, and I've been there for him. My other best friend, as well. People who are just there throughout—that's family.*

"Family" is not a given for these REC allosexual community activists and organisers. As their stories have demonstrated, they use their own creativity to define and perform their own visions of family. It is not that they exclude the biological ties from their imaginings of family; rather, they keep their options open and fluid, which, in turn, enables them to disidentify with the dominating imperative of the nuclear family instead of rejecting it outright and seeking out new models that they make compatible with the old ones. For many of them, this search involves attempts to fulfil emotional needs and desires, such as feelings of safety, love, even mourning. Such a search can be uncomfortable, but Ahmed (2004) does not view this as a negative; in fact, it can

actually be productive:

> The absence of models that are appropriate does not mean an absence of models. In fact, it is in "not fitting" the model of the nuclear family that queer families can work to transform what it is that families can do. The "not fitting" or discomfort opens up possibilities, an opening which can be difficult and exciting. (p. 154).

Whether it is negotiating the disclosure of one's allosexuality or looking for ways to belong in a familial unit, disidentification strategies offer REC allosexuals a mechanism to transform their intimate lives without sacrificing their identitarian attachments.

Establishing a disidentificatory space wherein they can conceive of family in singular ways enables my narrators and I to enjoy a buffer of psychic support that has helped them endure many of the trials and tribulations of daily life. From an early age, we learned that normative ideas defining what "family" and "kin" have not served us well psychically, emotionally, or materially. Since childhood, our own ontologies have pushed against and through the boundaries that various hegemonic social forces have constructed to contain what they see as our dangerously unintelligible identities. Heteronormative and homonormative notions of how we should relate to each other in society have continually threatened to erase us, to force us to run, to hide, to disappear; yet those very same aspects of our being that dominant discourses attempt to efface are what give us strength. The thing about our unintelligibility that works to our advantage is its inherent capacity to surprise—surprise not only our oppressors, but even us, as well. There are always untold histories that bubble to the surface, spilling out of the mouths of our elders and changing the way we see them, and they, us. The epistemologies that are passed down to us through the generations mingle with those that we accumulate through living our everyday lives, propelling us into

disidentificatory spaces where new families await, welcoming us with open arms to hold us and protect us.

Familial disidentifications can only provide a certain degree of protection, however; as we have already seen, there are forces in the world that aim to do discursive violence—which can lead to other forms of violence—on minoritized bodies. What is at stake is not the sense of intimate belonging that the family provides, but rather it is belonging writ large; it is belonging tied to public and collective life, defined by structures of citizenship. And within this domain, the struggle of REC allosexuals to exist intensifies, inciting new disidentifications.

Chapter Five

Citizenship Disidentifications

Part A: Myths of Citizenship

> *In Canada I am integrated because my survival depends on my being like everybody else.*
>
> Didi Khayatt (2001, p. 85)

Montreal is a diverse city, its population comprising a wide array of bodies that represent a virtual heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1934-1935/1981) of singularities. Emerging from this diversity is a unique and complex sociality, one that Elspeth Probyn (1996) says is best represented by the city's famous balcony culture:

> *The example of the balconies in Montreal has no necessary meaning, yet it exemplifies for me a certain movement as different and distinct elements are brought together, if only momentarily. Lines of class, gender, sex, generation, ethnicity, and race intermingle as people hang out. (p. 5)*

While this view suggests a sense of conviviality (Gilroy, 2005) flourishing among the city's denizens, there are also tensions that often mark social relations in Montreal, revealing that it has a dark side, as well. Recently, this dark side was thrust front and centre into the headlines in the form of what is known as the "reasonable accommodation debate."

In brief, the reasonable accommodation controversy in Quebec stemmed from a series of incidents, almost exclusively in Montreal, beginning in 2006 and continuing through 2007 (though some might argue they are still ongoing) that involved several permissions or allowances being granted—or not granted, in some instances—to individuals characterized as "immigrants," and that had both legal and social ramifications (see Bouchard & Taylor, 2008; Giasson, Brin, & Sauvageau, 2010; Lefebvre, 2009; Jiwani, 2007; Anctil, 2011a, 2011b; Mahrouse, 2010; Wong, 2011; Bilge, 2012, 2013; Gagnon & Jiwani, 2012). Most, if not all, of the permissions requested were religious in nature and attracted a great deal of media attention, which was exacerbated immensely when the three main political parties in the province made it an election issue (Wong, 2011; Bilge, 2013). The debate eventually became so heated that "Jean Charest, the premier of Québec, announced in February 2007 that a commission would be formed with the purpose of clarifying the notion of accommodement raisonnable among the population in general" (Anctil, 2011, p. 5). Appointed to lead the commission were two leading intellectuals in Quebec, Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, hence the shorthand name given to the commission, the

Bouchard-Taylor Commission.

One of the main mandates of the commission was to coordinate "une vaste consultation" on the subject of accommodating various cultural and religious practices in Quebec (Bouchard-Taylor, 2008, p. 17). Such a process would require the commissioners to collect hundreds of briefs submitted by citizens and organizations in Quebec, travel across the entire province to listen to the writers of these briefs state their case, analyse the briefs and presentations, and finally produce a report of their findings (Anctil, 2011, p. 6). Among the briefs submitted was one that I co-authored with Edward Lee, Nada Raphaël, and Joëlle Sfeir, along with Shari Brotman, Danielle Julien (2008).

The genesis of our brief can be traced back several months prior to our presentation of it. At the time, I was one of the lead coordinators of Coalition MultiMundo, which brought together several of the REC allosexual groups in Montreal under one umbrella organization. We had heard that Conseil du Québec des gais et lesbiennes (CQGL) was planning to submit a brief to the Conseil offering the "gay and lesbian" position on the issue. After several of us attended a consultation session organized by the CQGL to discuss the content of their submission, it became clear to us very quickly that it was not in our best interest as REC allosexuals to be represented by them in this context, as we felt their position reflected some rather racist and xenophobic thinking. Thus, we immediately set to work on our own brief, whereupon I took the lead. This was a truly collaborative effort, with members of the Coalition as well as a number of non-Coalition allies reading and offering advice on various drafts of the document. Finally, after a few months of writing and re-writing, we managed to produce a final version for submission, much to the chagrin of the CQGL, who were hoping that we would add our name as a Coalition to their brief for the sake of legitimacy.

When we were invited to speak at the consultation in Montreal—an opportunity not afforded to everyone who submitted, including the CQGL—we were overjoyed. However, when we discussed whom to select to present the brief, I tried to take my name off the table. I knew the consultations were being televised, and as I imagined myself proffering our position in front of two of the most renowned scholars in the province (and, in Taylor's case, in the world), I suddenly developed a very nasty case of stage fright. I suggested that Ed and Nada do the presentation; Ed, however, declined, insisting that I had to do it since I had written most of it. Nada said she would do it, but not alone. After much cajoling by the others, I ultimately relented.

We were told we would have 10 minutes to present, so Nada and I condensed the report down as best we could and practiced reading it over and over. As we were going to be reading the French translation of the brief, I did my best to speak with the most proper French accent I could muster, praying that my French skills were adequate enough to carry me through the presentation. When we arrived at the room in the Palais des congrès,[23] where the consultations were being held, we were informed that we would only have five minutes to present. This made me rather uneasy, but Nada and I worked together to cross out whatever we thought was unnecessary in the little time we had before we were to present.

As we waited our turn, we noticed that the presentations were a little behind schedule, so we were able to observe some of the other presenters who came before us. At that moment, there were two individuals from a Muslim community centre who were

[23] Montreal's convention centre.

speaking. Their centre had been in the news recently because one of their members, a young girl, had been ejected from a tae kwon do competition for refusing to remove her hijab during a match. The two presenters, who spoke in halting English, declared that much of debate around reasonable accommodation was racist against Muslims. Taylor responded haughtily that it was not racist, and Bouchard agreed, essentially dismissing the presenters' perspectives. I was dismayed by this; what kind of credibility did this commission have if the two men leading it were denying presenters their own feelings on the matter? I suddenly became very anxious about our own presentation.

The presenter who followed was a white Francophone woman. Because I was so mentally preoccupied with my own presentation, I paid little attention to the substance of her brief. It appeared, though, that Bouchard was doing most of the talking this time. I thought, hopefully, that this signified that he and Taylor were taking turns in responding to each presentation, which would mean that we would have Taylor, the Anglophone, since we were next on the list to present. This calmed my nerves somewhat.

When we were finally called to floor, my heart raced. I could feel my hands shake as we sat in front of the commissioners, and I began to wonder if this is what my dissertation defence would feel like. Nada spoke first—we had set up the presentation so we would take turns reading paragraphs—reading her first paragraph quickly and smoothly. When my turn came, I stumbled over the first few words, then the next few, then some more, until after about 15 seconds Bouchard interrupted me and asked me something in French.

"Pardon?" I replied, with my best French accent.

He repeated his question.

I could not understand a word he was saying.

I stared at him blankly, unsure how to respond. Though the silence lasted only a couple of seconds, it felt like an eternity. I looked helplessly at Nada, who proceeded to respond to him in her fluent French, and did so for the remainder of our allotted time, while I simply sat in my seat, an overwhelming sense of shame washing over me, questioning whether there was truly a place for me in Montreal after all.

* * *

Since the days of Antiquity, citizenship has been a much theorized, debated, and contested concept in the West/North. Indeed, political theorists such as Richard J. F. Day (2000) and Merryl Wyn Davies, Ashis Nandy, and Ziauddin Sardar (1993) have noted that contemplations on citizenship as we know it today can be traced back to the Greek philosopher Herodotus, who created a classification system that defined and determined the standards by which one would or would not be considered Greek. Those who fell outside of the system were regarded as "Others" (Day, 2000, p. 49) or "monstrous semi-

human beings" (p. 50). In the same vein, Davies, Nandy, and Sardar (1993) point out that efforts by the Greeks to legitimize and valorize their own subjectivity gave rise to the conceptualization of barbarity, whereby anyone who could not speak Greek—essentially all non-Greeks—was considered a "babbler," or *barbaroi*, and thus was perceived to have "no faculty of reason" or ability to "act according to logic"; possess "poorly developed" intellect and an inability "to control their passions"; and bear no understanding of "true reason" (p. 26-27). Consequently, those tagged as barbarians fell outside the purview of Greek citizenship.

Such delineations and demarcations go to the heart of what citizenship is all about: the decision-making power that establishes who does or does not belong or who will or will not be included in a given society. In effect, citizenship is about membership—membership not only in the nation state, but also in other realms and milieus that are "imagined," as both Benedict Anderson (1991) and Étienne Balibar (1988/1991c) would say, including those of civic society, local culture, and political community. Nira Yuval-Davis (2007), who uses as her launching point, as many citizenship scholars do, T. H. Marshall's (1950/2009) definition of citizenship,[24] highlights this multifaceted character of citizenship through her concept of the "multi-layered citizen," which suggests that "people are citizens simultaneously in more than one political community" (Yuval-Davis, 2007, p. 562). Moreover, she adds,

> it is also important to remember that people's citizenships are also affected by their locations within each polity, as they are constructed (often in unstable and

[24] Marshall (1950/2009) defines citizenship as "a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community [and] are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed" (pp. 149-150).

> contested ways) by other intersecting social divisions, such as gender, class, stage in the life cycle, etc. (p. 562-563)

Thus, citizenship is embedded in the very existence of all human beings on many different levels. We can neither avoid nor escape its presence or influence.

What Marianna Torgovnick (1992) refers to as "the politics of the we" is central to the operationalization of citizenship practices. "This 'we,'" Torgovnick notes, "is more than a pronoun. In fact, the actual pronoun is only the most obvious marker, the sign and symbol of how the circle of culture gets drawn: who's in, who's out, why, and to what extent" (p. 43). Thus, just as an "us" cannot exist without a "them," so too, in accordance with Émile Benveniste's (1966/1971) perspective, can a "we" not exist without a "you." One result of this process of bifurcation is the identification by us/we of them/you as strangers. Those who are identified by us/we as them/you are marked as strangers. Zygmunt Bauman (1997) observes that "[a]ll societies produce strangers, but each kind of society [or community or culture] produces its own kind of strangers, and produces them in its own inimitable way" (p. 46). In this view, strangers can never become citizens, for the former's existence ensures the latter's. Accordingly, the stranger must always remain the stranger in order for the citizen to thrive, and thus many citizens will constantly seek ways to keep strangers in their place, leading to the establishment of what Balibar (1988/1991c) describes as "frontiers," which separate "ourselves" from "foreigners" (p. 94).

Such exclusions are thrown into sharp relief when one considers, for instance, the precarious status of refugees, whose presence in the nation states of the North/West, according to Giorgio Agamben (1995), "[break] up the identity between man [*sic*] and citizen, between nativity and nationality," thereby "[throwing] into crisis the original

fiction of sovereignty” (p. 117). That the refugee always remains outside the realm of citizenship is no accident, for his, her, or Their mere existence troubles the very meaning of citizenship for those who hold it; therefore, to bestow a permanent status such as that of citizenship, with all its inherent rights, upon the refugee is to put oneself on a path towards uncertainty, and for the “native”-born citizenry, such a path is unacceptable. In other words, if, as Agamben remarks, “[n]ation-state means a state that makes nativity or birth (that is, of the bare human life) the foundation of its own sovereignty” (p. 116), then refugees—the epitome of stranger-hood—are viewed as always already a threat to raze that foundation (see also Jenicek, Lee, & Wong, 2009; Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Esses, Veenvliet, Hodson, & Mihic, 2008; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008; Gale, 2004; Laviolette, 1997, 2003; Leudar, Hayes, Nekvapil, & Baker, 2008; Lynn & Lea, 2003; Mihelj, 2004; Miller, 2005; and van Dijk, 1988).

It bears mentioning that the stranger/citizen divide can be produced through many different discursive sites, including sexuality. In fact, David Bell and Jon Binnie (2000) argue that “*all citizenship is sexual citizenship*, in that the foundational tenets of being a citizen are all inflected by sexualities” (authors’ emphasis) (p. 10). For allosexual folk, such a citizenship has been expressed through “the historical division between the ‘good heterosexual citizen’ and ‘the homosexual’ as *alien outsider*, who represents a potential threat to the nation state” (author’s emphasis) (Richardson, 2004, p. 395). This division underscores the “naturalized, heteronormative modality of sexual citizenship implicit in mainstream political and legal formations” (Bell & Binnie, 2000, p. 33). To circumscribe the hegemonic power of discursive heteronormativity, Diane Richardson (2004) notes that many allosexuals within the past few decades have

employed an “if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em” approach to sexual identity, resulting in the emergence of homonormative behaviour, as seen in Chapter 4. Homonormativity as a teleological end has assumed many forms over the years, perhaps most publicly in the fight for same-sex marriage rights (Warner, 1999; Richardson, 2004; Bell & Binnie, 2000; Owen, 2001; Stychin, 2005; Eng, 2010; Puar, 2007), and has been contested by such queer critics as Michael Warner (1999), who asserts that the homonormative movement is a “betrayal of the abject and the queer in favor of a banalized respectability” (p. 66) and has stigmatized sex to such an extent that queer activism now fiercely resists its rebellious image rather than revelling in it (p. 76), thereby fomenting a new hierarchy among allosexuals (p. 80). In turn, queer theory itself has been criticized for its normativizing power, with Ruth Goldman (1996) calling it out for being “generated mainly by white academics” (p. 172) and Viviane K. Namaste (2000) objecting to its lack of “concern for the individuals who live, work, and identify themselves as drag queens, transsexuals, and transgenderists” (p. 9).

In their practices and “anxious enactments” (Joseph, 1999b, p. 5) of citizenship, then, members of contemporary collective entities—whether they be nation-states, identity-based groups, or otherwise—continue to rely on the same Manichean dialectics that the Greeks deployed to maintain the “integrity” of their citizen subjectivities. This split is not self-sustaining, however; the appropriation and use of certain tools by those holding decision-making power is necessary to reinforce the binary structure of us-and-them on an ongoing basis. One such tool is myth.

For example, Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (1990) contend that national myths are a particularly potent way of excluding minorities from the narrative of the

nation: "The powerful have a breathtaking ability to stamp their own meanings on the past" (p. 18). Certainly, the histories constructed and promoted by those with power and influence form the foundation upon which many modern citizenship practices are based. In this way, one can make the connection between myth and the imaginary of which both Anderson (1991) and Balibar (1988/1991c) speak. As Luisa Passerini (1990), borrowing from Evelyne Patlagean (1980), suggests, myths can be seen "as part of the history of the imaginary" to which "generations of human beings have contributed to create our own notions of reality" (p. 52), whatever form of citizenship or noncitizenship that "reality" might take (Joseph, 1999b). Myths, then, are the driving force behind the imagining—or "fantasizing," in Ghassan Hage's (2000) words—of a nation, community, society, or culture; consequently, citizenship itself is bound in and by myth, as well.

And yet, despite its inherently mythic character—even with its propensity to exclude—or perhaps even because of it, citizenship is something many strangers continue to seek out, to aspire towards, to possess. This might be due to the fact that citizenship offers one who holds it a certain kind of identity—an identity that comes with advantages, with rights and privileges. For example, in the general understanding of citizenship "as a universal concept," says Renato Rosaldo (1999), "all citizens of a particular nation state are equal before the law" (p. 253; see also Hall & Williamson, 1999, p. 2). Therefore, there is the practical side to being citizen, whereby such a status affords the individual not only protection, but also ostensibly inclusion as an equal in society.

One's identity as a citizen can also provide, in Stuart Hall's (1996a) view, "a kind of guarantee that the world isn't falling apart quite as rapidly as it sometimes seems to

be" (p. 339). This is because an identity achieved through citizenship can present us with an access point to commonalities (and, hence, allegiances and solidarities) we may share with other people or groups (Hall, 1996b, p. 3). Identification through citizenship, then, might possibly imbue us with a feeling of belongingness—satisfying a longing to be, as both Michael Ignatieff (1994) and Charles Taylor (1993) have argued, "recognized" and "understood," or as Will Kymlicka (1995) and James Tully (1995), put it, "accommodated." This is the idealistic perspective on identity through the lens of citizenship and is representative of theorizing on citizenship in Canada by these Canadian political philosophers. However, as another Canadian thinker, Avigail Eisenberg, (1995) points out:

> Belonging to a group that is *disadvantaged* in the larger society is bound to have a profound and, in some instances, a negative impact on the individual's identity. This is because our identity is not solely our own creation but is also a function of how others understand and treat us (emphasis mine) (p. 173).

In other words, how we treat each other not only reflects, but also *produces* who we are as individuals; and for those in the margins, that frequently means being on the receiving end of an iterative cycle of discursive or what Kirsten Emiko McAllister (2011) calls "political violence," a "systemic deployment of measures" that extends beyond bodily harm to include the fracturing of entire communities (p. 12).

This perspective points to the emotional character of citizenship. If, as we have seen in Chapter Four, notions of family can become conflated with those of community and nation, and if one of the primary ways in which we conceive of and experience family is through emotions, then certainly a clear line can be drawn between emotion and citizenship in the variegated ways the latter is constructed. Lauren Berlant (1997), for example, contends that, in the U.S. context,

> the intimate public sphere […] renders citizenship as a condition of social membership produced by personal acts and values, especially acts originating in or directed toward the family sphere. No longer valuing personhood as something directed toward public life, contemporary nationalist ideology recognizes a public good only in a particularly constricted nation of simultaneously lived private worlds. (p. 5)

Such an ideology has spawned what Berlant refers to as a Reaganite-politics of "national sentimentality," so called "because it is a politics that abjures politics, made on behalf of a private life protected from the harsh realities of power" (p. 11), producing a citizenship that is naïve or, in Berlant's words, "infantile" (see also Balibar, 1988/1991a). As such, one's feelings become bound up in neoliberal conceptions of the personal, in what matters within one's private sphere (rights, property, capital), which are then projected into the public sphere, into the realm of national belonging, which, in turn, is transformed into an anti-social space of parochialism (the right to have rights, property, and capital) rather than of the common good. Hence, José Esteban Muñoz (2000) contends, citizenship in the U.S. (indeed, in much of the industrialized world) has become embedded in a form of nationalism that has given rise to particular "performances of affect"—ones that privilege an "'official' national affect" over those of minoritized subjects such as Latina/os (p. 69).

Similarly, Sara Ahmed (2004) has emphasized the connections between emotion and citizenship in the United Kingdom through her analysis of the politics of the "we" favoured by the neo-Nazi group, The British National Front, who attempt to incite feelings of anger among British taxpayers towards illegal immigrants. "Indeed," says Ahmed, "to feel love for the nation, whereby love is an investment that should be returned (you are 'the taxpayer'), is also to feel injured by these others, who are 'taking' what is yours" (p. 1). As these analyses demonstrate, the ties that bind emotion to

(neoliberal) citizenship are extremely tight and can be manipulated in a variety of ways to achieve often nefarious ends (see also: Cheng, 2000; Muñoz, 2000; Ahmed, 2010; Brown, 2006; Puar, 2007; Eng, 2010; Nyong'o, 2009).

Given this, is the pursuit of this citizenship ideal worth the effort? Can one truly gain equality through citizenship? Does the citizenship imperative, as I call it, ultimately make citizens out of strangers? If one goes by the liberal paradigm, as Ignatieff, Taylor, and Kymlicka do, then the answer to all these questions is *not at all*; for citizenship to maintain its value and power, it will still require the existence of strangers as its counterpoint. Thus, new myths will be invented (or old myths re-invented), new emotions will be incited, new lines will be drawn, and new frontiers will be put in place (by those holding the cultural, social, political, and economic capital to do so) to ensure that strangers—even if they believe themselves to be citizens—remain on the outside looking in. Thus, as a myth itself, citizenship is illusory; we may reach a point where we think we possess it, but in reality we have been tricked, deceived. Citizenship is always already a chimera.

We can say, then, that the citizenship imperative in our liberal Western/Northern society is a performative process—a process that involves the enactment of belonging and exclusion and the interplay between them, each dependent on the other to enable it: the desire to belong only emerges if one is feeling excluded from a particular milieu, and the impulse to exclude only arises when others wish to belong to the same milieu. It is a process that also relies on the performance of certain myths to sustain it—complex and varied myths, sustained through emotion, that nourish the larger mythic narrative of citizenship. It is these myths to which I now turn and outline in brief.

Myth #1: This Land Is Your Land

The first myth is that of citizenship as tied to a particular ideation of place and space. There is a tendency within citizenship discourses to identify a bounded territory as a site of belonging and exclusion. Such identifications assume that there is a certain “nature and coherence,” according to Doreen Massey (1995), that is inherent to a given place; however, the notion of “place is by no means confined to the level of the nation state” (p. 186). Massey cites the London docklands as an example where the application of the concept of place is just as valid as that applied to nations such as Serbia (p. 186). Thus, place as it pertains to citizenship can be as much about regions and neighbourhoods as it is about nations.

What becomes problematic with respect to place is the way in which it is thought of in “deeply essentialist and internalist” terms, expressed either “implicitly or explicitly” (Massey, 1995, p. 183); as Gail Mason (2002) states, “Territory […] has both material and discursive facets to it” (p. 60). Monolithic constructions of place “not only fail to recognise the long history of interconnectedness with elsewhere (the history of the global construction of the local), they also presuppose a particular relationship between the assumed identity of a place and its history” (Massey, 1995, p. 183; see also Kraidy, 1999). It is these failures and presuppositions, as deployed through citizenship discourses, that structure a certain belief of what it means to belong to a place as well as establish the criteria to determine who does or does not belong there. This is why Massey (1995), citing both Anderson (1991) and Eric Hobsbawm (1983), regards the construction of place, so inseparable from history, as “a form of the ‘invention of

tradition’” (p. 186).

As a consequence of this construction, tensions and conflicts arise as different groups stake their claims to places and contest these spaces in a struggle over “ownership and belonging” that relies on “conceptual categories” such as “whiteness, femininity or heterosexuality” (Mason, 2002, p. 60) or on the boundedness of what Joane Nagel (2003) call “ethnosexual frontiers” (p. 14). The most egregious example of this can be found in the era of European colonization and the legacy it left in its wake. During this period, explorers representing such nations as France, Great Britain, and Spain, among others in Europe, fanned out across the globe, given royal assent “to protect and lay secure claim to whatever marketable resource one might require” (Davies et al, 1993, p. 5). In the British context, this meant that the British monarchy commanded these seafarers to declare any newfound territory to be the King’s or Queen’s land (p. 11). Certainly, this was true of all such ventures originating from Europe. The imperial European *oculus mundi* (see West, 2002, p. 96) sparking, then driving this invasion envisioned the rest of the world as ripe for the picking, regardless of who may or may not already have been there. In their minds, “undiscovered places” were always already theirs.

Upon reaching North America’s shores, the European colonizers were fully indoctrinated in this mindset, which to them justified their view of this “new” land as *terra nullius* and *terra incognita*, as Aboriginal scholar Joyce Green (1995), among others, has indicated. In the colonizers’ eyes, the Indigenous populations that lived here did not count as people, and thus could not claim ownership of the land in the same way that Europeans conceived of ownership, thus making it “available” for settlement. This

belief has become a staple of Canadian nationalist mythology, reified and reinforced through history books and even the arts. For example, Eva Mackey (1999) and Erin Manning (2000) have both observed that paintings by the Group of Seven have depicted the Canadian landscape as vast and empty. As Mackey points out, "[T]hese nationalistic northern paintings are specifically empty of signs not just of people, but of *Native people*" (author's emphasis) (p. 44). And while there are non-aboriginals who accept that there were human beings in North America before 1492, they often use other arguments, such as that of the Bering Strait land bridge theory,[25] to delegitimize and dismiss Aboriginal land claims. Thus, "New World" nations such as Canada and the United States, while offering Indigenous peoples access to citizenship, would never allow them to do so on their own terms, which would include acknowledging their title to the land; or, conversely, Aboriginals would never want to be citizens of a nation that is, for all intents and purposes, built on land that was stolen from them in the first place. In short, Native peoples simultaneously are excluded from the colonial nation and reject any prospect of belonging to it because the land is theirs, and yet it is not—at least according to Western/Northern thinking.

Land as a binding myth in citizenship discourse is also challenged by the presence of "newcomers" and "outsiders," including immigrants and refugees, as both Martha Norkunas (2002) and Ghassan Hage (2000) have documented. In writing about monuments in Lowell, Massachusetts, Norkunas (2002) mentions that their

[25] This theory contends that aboriginals in North America are actually descendants of migrants from Asia who crossed what is now the Bering Strait via a land bridge that joined the two continents together thousands of years earlier, thereby refuting aboriginal assertions that they have always existed on the continent (Waters, 2000; Churchill, 2002).

establishment is always an issue of "identity and power" (p. 181); consequently minoritized groups such as the Cambodians "not represented on the landscape" (p. 182), even though they consider themselves to be as much a part of the city and, indeed, the nation as those groups who do have monuments mounted in their honour. In effect, they are excluded from the very territory on which they exist, preventing them from sharing in that sense of belonging that their counterparts in other identity groups may experience.

With respect to Australia, Hage (2000) argues that territorialism is at the very heart of the exclusion of Others from such a White nation:

> As soon as I begin to worry about where "they" are located, or about the existence of "too many," I am beginning to worry not just about my "race," "ethnicity," "culture," or "people," but also about what I consider a privileged relationship between my race, ethnicity and so on, and a territory. (p. 32)

Although Australia has become a diverse society, there is a hierarchy that exists when it comes to the land. The dominant population becomes territorial, and incites itself to certain forms of violence against non-dominant groups to ensure that the territory remains in its hands. These groups are made to feel as if they are lesser citizens, repeatedly being informed, through acts both verbal and physical, that they do not truly belong (see also Mason, 2002).

Like Australia, Canada has made boundary maintenance a key component of its immigration policies in an effort to ensure the Whiteness of the nation, as indicated by the song, "White Canada Forever".[26] My own family was affected by such policies as they sought entry into Canada for a better life. From the late 1800s until the mid-1900s,

[26] The song includes the lyrics "Then let us stand united all / And show our father's might / That won the home we call our own, / For white man's land we fight" (unknown, qtd. in Ward, 1990, p. xx).

the federal government in Canada passed a series of anti-Chinese immigration laws in order at first to discourage, then prohibit outright the tide of migrants coming from China, as politicians and their supporters claimed that the Chinese were “culturally unable to assimilate and undesirable” (Li and Lee, 2005, p. 646). Consequently, some Chinese families and individuals had to find other methods to gain admittance into the country. One such method that was used by my father was to enter as a “paper son.” As Xiaoping Li and Jo-Anne Lee (2005) explain, “This term refers to the clandestine practice of bringing boys or girls into Canada through purchased birth certificates of children who had been born [to Chinese parents with Canadian citizenship], but who had died when young” (p. 650). Thus, my grandfather purchased one of these birth certificates for my father, Sui Tong Wong, who arrived in Canada in 1951 newly named as Tare Chin. Such were the lengths to which immigrants had to go to circumvent the racist policies of the colonial British Empire.

Once citizen-aspirants ostensibly succeed in their teleological mission to access the nation state, they will likely encounter other citizenship tests at the sub-national level. This is a reality that is all too familiar for those living in Quebec, a place wherein citizenship has been defined, redefined, claimed, contested, and reclaimed in a seemingly endless cycle since The Quiet Revolution, a period in the early 1960s that saw Quebec untether itself from the control of both the Catholic Church and the Anglo-Canadian establishment and become “a modern welfare state with a liberalized economy, a secular outlook, and nationalized energy and banking institutions” (Hurley, 2011, p. 20; see also, among others, Turgeon, 2004; Létourneau, 2000/2004; Maclure, 2003; Karmis, 2004; Gagnon, 2004). This era is also generally considered to be the

period when Quebec's nationalist movement—which advocated for more political, economic, and territorial rights, including separation from Canada (Turgeon, 2004)—began (Maclure, 2003, p. 165). As part of this current of nationalism, notions of race and ethnicity were woven into the fantasy of the land, evidenced, says David Austin (2010), "in the racially charged language of '*pure laine*' (literally, 'pure wool') and '*Québécois de souche*' (literally of, or related to, the bark and roots of a tree)" (p. 25; see also Ship, 2001), which established parameters for the identification of those who belonged in the Quebec of the *indépendantiste* imaginary, thereby creating a crisis of identity for many people who called the region home. As Guy Bédard (2001) confesses,

> What profoundly embarrasses me about this slogan *Québec aux Québécois* is that it forces me to choose between a territorial concept of Québécois citizenship […] and an ethnic definition of Québécitude based on race, culture, and language: social markers for exclusion. (p. 30)

The city presents another sub-stratum of belonging; indeed, many theorists have long posited that urban centres are major sites of citizenship. For example, Max Weber (1921), Englin F. Isin (2008a) observes, hypothesizes that in the Greece and Rome of Antiquity, it was one's association with the city that determined his or her citizenship status (267-268); hence, "[b]elonging to the city, and belonging to the city alone, was the necessary condition of being a citizen" (p. 268). Isin still sees this relationship between the city and the citizen represented in contemporary cities to a certain degree, although he contends that it has evolved into a two-pronged association around rights in the form of the rights *of* the city and the rights *to* the city:

> The articulation and claiming of the rights of the city and to the city demand different practices. While rights of the city essentially revolve around legal rights and changes in law, rights to the city involve social rights and changes in norms. (p. 273)

An extension of this structuration of the city, notes Cheryl Teelucksingh (2006), is the "spatialized struggles between groups to *claim space*" (author's emphasis), with the notion of "[s]patiality […] considered in terms of both material and symbolic or discursive issues of agency and difference" (p. 8). Thus, different social groups, who have different resources and different agendas, will compete with each other for space in the city, with the victor usually represented by the hegemon with economic, social, and political capital. In the words of Katherine A.H. Graham and Susan D. Phillips (2007), "[P]lace matters" (p. 160)

Often, the result of such competition is the marginalization of certain groups. Bell and Binnie (2000) remark that "[s]ome cities, rather than being nurturing of difference, are notoriously resistant to it" (p. 88). Teelucksingh (2006), for example, draws attention to the ways in which urban spaces in Canada are highly racialized, while Warner (1999) denounces the move in some urban centres to push sexuality back into the closet, pointing out that "sex publics in New York that have been built up over several decades—by the gay movement, by AIDS activism, and by countercultures of many different kinds—are now endangered by a new politics of privatization" (p. 153). And while "[m]ost major North American cities contain an area referred to as the gay 'ghetto,' 'village,' or neighbourhood," Catherine Nash (2001) says, "most are dominated by gay men" (p. 235; see also Podmore, 2001, 2006). Likewise, Rinaldo Walcott (2006) and Charles I. Nero (2005) have both railed against the racism against blacks in gay spaces occupied predominantly by wealthy, white gay men. As Binnie and Bell (2000) assert, "The production of queer spaces and citizenship means *inclusion* for some, but also implies the *exclusion* of others: not all queers are equally free to gain from these

encounters" (authors' emphasis) (p. 84). The capacity to claim space, then, is contingent on one's positionality based on not only race, gender, sexuality, class, and other identity markers, but their intersections, as well.

Montreal is not immune to these kinds of tensions. According to Sherry Simon (2006), Montreal, once a "divided city" that was bifurcated along a French/English axis, has now been affected dramatically by racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversification due to a marked increase in immigration (p. xv), resulting in "[p]rotectionism and competition within the divided city" and, thus, "preventing engagement with a real and invigorating foreignness" (p. xvi). Immigrants who make Montreal their destination for settlement are given their own designation outside the familiar identifications—those of Francophone and Anglophone—that have traditionally defined the city:

> Caught between origins—in their native lands and in their adopted territory—the immigrant's liminal position is reflected in terms often used to describe her or him: "*néo-Québécois* and "*allophone.*" As indicated above, the prefix "neo" [*sic*] indicates the immigrant's recent arrival in Quebec. However, recency is rather expansive in this terminology, as "néo-Québécois" is often used for adults […] who arrived as children and for second- and third-generation immigrants. (Hurley, 2011, pp. 93-94; see also Bannerji, 2000, p. 112)

Sexuality has been an additional marker of spatial contestation in Montreal, with the *Village Gai* defined from both within and without: "Villages are a product of both a city's tolerance and of pressures that confine overt gay life to a defined area" (Hunt and Zacharias, 2008, p. 33). In turn, the *Village Gai* has become normativized and totalized, emphasizing particular kinds of "gay space and bodies as uniform and conventional" (p. 30). As a city uniquely situated in terms of its identity dynamics, Montreal offers a compelling example of urban citizenship at its most messy (Dominguez, 1992) and complex.

The importance of place to citizenship has gained mythic proportions. The belief that citizenship and occupancy of a space are inseparable is countered by the experiences of countless groups and individuals who are never seen as truly belonging to the territory. These include, among countless examples, diasporic populations who are continually forced to negotiate their ideas of home (Brah, 1997) and urban queers who witness the neighbourhoods that they have built up and claimed as their own become “purified” by municipal initiatives instigated under the guise of urban renewal (Bell & Binnie, 2004; Warner, 1999). Millions of people in supposedly democratic spaces are constantly being displaced not only from those spaces, but also from citizenship itself. Such is the way the myth of place operates—by drawing people to the myth, trapping them inside it, and then usurping control of the space, revealing that place is not neutral, but gendered, raced, and classed (among many others).

Myth #2: Equality Before the Law

The second myth of citizenship suggests that the laws and policies established by and within Western/Northern societies ensure equality for all of their citizens through the granting of rights. As Carl F. Stychin (1998) suggests, “A politics of rights can […] facilitate the division between the assimilable and the non-assimilable into a national imaginary constituted around citizenship” (p. 14). In this light, the possibility of acquiring legally-enshrined rights gives citizenship an irresistible allure; yet an imaginary is still an imaginary, and, hence, also deceptive. According to Sherene Razack (1998),

> Rights in law are fundamentally about seeing and not seeing, about the cold game of equality staring. […] Equality staring, however […] feels like a no-win

> situation. […] If oppression exists, then there must also be oppressors, and oppressors do not have a moral basis for their rights claims. If, however, we are all equally human, with some of us simply not as advanced or developed as others, then no one need take responsibility for inequality. (p. 23)

Thus, rights enshrined in law serve to maintain social, political, and economic hegemony by obfuscating "the daily realities of oppressed groups" (p. 23). One such means of concealment is tolerance, which, Wendy Brown (2006) asserts,

> emerges as part of a civilizational discourse that identifies both tolerance and the tolerable within the West, marking nonliberal societies and practices as candidates for an intolerable barbarism that is itself signaled [*sic*] by the putative intolerance ruling these societies. (p. 6)

To the latter I would also add the *people* originating from these societies.

It must be stressed that this is a particular kind of law referred to here—a law that originates from and is grounded in European traditions. For example, Canada's legal structure has been influenced primarily by British and French cultures. John Borrows (2005) says that it is a structure that has been deemed "bijuridical" by constitutional lawyers such as Marie-Claude Gervais (p. 159). Borrows, however, considers this concept to be "underinclusive" because it only recognizes two legal systems in Canada, emphasizing that "[n]umerous indigenous legal traditions continue to function in Canada in systematically important ways" (pp. 159-160). Consequently, Borrows advocates the use and application of the terms "multijuridical or legally pluralistic" (p. 160).

The Aboriginal legal question notwithstanding, Canadian law in its current form has still proven itself to be exclusionary despite claims that the passing of the Constitution Act in 1982, which included the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, brought with it "a more egalitarian society in which authentic expressions of diversity are more highly valued than deference to majoritarian conformity" (Cairns, 1995, p. 28). A

number of theorists have attempted to devise solutions to this problem of exclusion that would be compatible with the Canadian constitution. Kymlicka (1995), for example, suggests a “multicultural citizenship,” which “will include both universal rights, assigned to individuals regardless of group membership, and certain group-differentiated rights or ‘special status’ for minority cultures” (p. 6). To support his contention, Kymlicka holds up current state multicultural policies as the exemplary embodiment of such a theory put into practice. Such policies, he asserts, are “intended to enable immigrants to express their ethnic identity, if they so desire, and to reduce some of the external pressures on them to assimilate” (p. 41). Taylor (1993) offers up a similar rationale with his theory of “deep diversity,” which posits that two levels of diversity should exist for the Canadian state: one that offers up the Charter and multiculturalism as discourses through which citizens can develop for themselves a means of attachment to the Canadian nation-state (p. 182); and another for those who do not feel accommodated by this level of diversity, specifically national groups such as Quebec/French Canada, with the First Nations receiving merely a passing mention (p. 183).

While they ostensibly distribute rights to non-majoritarian groups, Taylor’s (1993) and Kymlicka’s (1995) theories actually shift the stratification that exists between these groups and the dominant population to a different, but parallel, realm. In her critique of Taylor’s (1993) work, Himani Bannerji (2000) relays her suspicion that he is promoting certain facets of “modernity and liberal democracy” while simultaneously favouring the retention of old world European as a bulwark against “a mass culture and an exaggerated egalitarianism” (p. 128). Day likewise (2000) offers a

similar critique of Kymlicka (1995), highlighting in the latter's book the "constant reference to a passively voiced 'we' that will decide what gifts to give to 'them'" (p. 215). Ultimately, these concepts put forth by Taylor and Kymlicka are deterministic of who counts as a true citizen in the legal and constitutional sense and who belongs in second class.

Meanwhile, the Quebec government, which devised its own Charter of Rights several years prior to the introduction of the Canadian version, has come up with its own policy of pluralism in response to that of Canadian multiculturalism: *inter*culturalism. According to Cory Blad and Philippe Couton (2009), "Quebec's intercultural framework is a collection of legislation and policies that simultaneously strengthens the dominant position of the French language while facilitating the accommodation and integration of immigrants commonly referred to as 'neo-*Québécois*'" (authors' emphasis) (p. 659). Structuring this framework are three main points: Quebec's democratic values; its standing as "a pluralist society […] protected by law"; and the accentuation of French as the common language (p. 660). Where interculturalism stresses "specific traditional ethno-cultural norms [that] serve as the dominant social context into which migrants must integrate," multiculturalism "requires fewer *official* socio-cultural requisites" (author's emphasis) (pp. 651-652).

While Blad and Couton (2009) as well as a number of other political philosophers (Bouchard and Taylor, 2008; Gagnon and Iacovino, 2004; Karmis, 2004; McAndrew, 2007; Anctil, 1996) have promoted interculturalism as the ideal state-sanctioned model for integrating migrants into Quebec society, Daniel Salée (2003, 2007) has argued otherwise, stating,

> In fact, there is no profound difference between Quebec's approach to diversity management and that of Canada. Both are premised on the state's will to foster an all-encompassing, integrative citizenship, which, ideally, would rally all. Both partake of the same liberal vision of individual equality and respect for individual freedoms; though they may apply or interpret it in varying ways, they draw from the same social and cultural normative framework. And, finally, despite the lofty and humanist ideals that are said to inform their respective understandings of diversity management, both are susceptible to straying away from those ideals or implementing them without conviction. (2007, p. 116)

Salée then adds, "Deliberations are not free of power plays" (p. 133). In other words, the "democratic principles" underpinning such policies, no matter what they are called, are shown to be merely cosmetic, rather than substantive, when put into practice.

Salée's (2003, 2007) perspective on interculturalism resonates with Balibar's (1988/1991c) articulation of "fictive ethnicity." To Balibar, just as a social community is the product of the imagination (p. 93), so too is ethnicity a "fabrication," in that there is no organic foundation for ethnicity in the context of the nation; however,

> as social formations [such as the bourgeoisie and the peasantry] are nationalized, the populations included within them, divided up among them or dominated by them are ethnicized—that is, represented in the past or in the future *as if* they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture and interests which transcends individuals and social conditions. (author's emphasis) (p. 96)

Two paths to the production of ethnicity, according to Balibar, are language and race, which often work together to manufacture a vision of "the people" as a monolithic and "autonomous unit" frozen in time with intrinsic qualities that enable it to transcend individuality and socio-political relations, all while appearing to be the natural and normal representation of nationhood (pp. 96-97). Language, in particular, not only offers a "common code" (p. 97) to bind subjects together within a national identity, but it is also *culturalized* (Balibar, 1988/1991a; see also Razack, 1998; Muñoz, 2000) "as the very element of the life of a people" (Balibar, 1988/1991c, p. 98). Language then

becomes a "sticky" affective object (Ahmed, 2004)—an object of love (Balibar, 1988/1991c, p. 98)—to which people are drawn.

To create a border or frontier around language to give it a sense of "closure" (p. 99) and make it synonymous with a people and, hence, the nation, language subsequently undergoes a process of *racialization* (see also Jiwani, 2006). Again, this hearkens back to the structuralization of nation as family, such that language becomes conflated with the genealogy or bloodline of a people who, throughout its "history," has passed down from generation to generation not only language, but also race (Balibar, 1988/1991c, p. 100). Those who do not match *both* the historically-sutured language and race, therefore, do not belong to the national "family," despite assurances to the contrary by, for example, defenders of interculturalism. This is why, according to Elspeth Probyn (1996), the figure of the matriarch has long been valued as the nationalist embodiment of Catholic, Francophone Québec, for her fertility is necessary to the reproduction of the Québécois family *de souche* and, coextensively, the nation (pp. 85-86), thereby interdicting cultural assimilation by English Canada and other forces, including immigrants (pp. 88-89). As Balibar (1988/1991c) concludes, "The production of ethnicity is also the racialization of language and the verbalization of race" (p. 104).

Moreover, even in spite of the proliferation of rights that have been "granted" to various social groups such as women and ethnic and racial "minorities" in Canada, there are still limits and expectations in play that shape and define what is or is not acceptable for a citizen in terms of behaviour, appearance, and values. This is usually decided through a discourse of "reason." David Theo Goldberg (1993) suggests that the notion of reason "as embodying ahistorical and universal principles and standards of thought, and

by implication as committing the ‘Man of Reason’ to objective, neutral, impartial, and universally valid socio-political and moral values” (p. 118), is a Western construct. As such, it rejects or ignores the culturalization involved in its own production, which, in turn, conceals its oppressive and exclusionary propensities (pp. 118-119). Thus, reason in this universalist sense has been used as a means of justifying the characterization of minoritized peoples, particularly those perceived to be non-Western immigrants (whether or not they *actually* are), as “unreasonable” or “irrational” (p. 119).

This deployment of reason has had a profound influence on how citizens have been characterized in Canadian legal discourse. One effect of this deployment, according to Yasmin Jiwani (2006), has been the emergence of two dialectically rendered—but not necessarily opposed—types of citizen: the “ideal Canadian,” who is a “law-abiding, rational, White, middle-class person who speaks the dominant language and embodies national mythologies that are performed accordingly”; and the “preferred immigrant,” who “tends to be a person of colour,” is “law-abiding and polite, assimilates into the dominant society,” and “is the model minority” (p. xiv). These “reasonable” types have become, in effect, “the implicit standards against which Others are evaluated” (p. xiv). We have seen these constructions surface during the “reasonable accommodation” debates detailed above, wherein non-(White)Quebecois were (and still are) frequently judged according to their adherence to Quebecois norms and values. Even “preferred immigrants” have not been immune to such judgements. Richard Delgado (1999) would say this is a typical result of what he calls “nativist movements,” which usually become more prevalent during socially and economically unstable times, taking the form of either stricter, racially-influenced immigration laws and policies or “measures aimed at

making things difficult for those who are already here" (p. 247), as evidenced by anti-immigrant laws in Tea Party states in the U.S. such as Arizona and tougher refugee policies introduced by the neo-conservative Canadian government led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

The dispute over face coverings and voting is a case in point. Echoing the controversy around the public donning of the hijab, niqab, chador, and burqa in France (see Bilge, 2008; Jiwani, 2006; Razack, 2008), much rancour was stirred up by a bevy of politicians, journalists, and others who were upset with the decision by the chief electoral officers at both the provincial and federal level in Canada to allow women to wear the niqab or other face-covering garments for religious reasons at the polling stations (Authier, Dougherty, & Bauch, 2007, p. A11). Although these officers were merely reiterating what was already permitted by law, the angry sentiments that were aroused revealed a not-so-subtle racism permeating Quebec and the larger Canadian society. Thus, Canadians may say they follow the rule of the law, but they can also be selective about which laws matter or which interpretations make sense to them, especially in their application to human rights.

Indeed, the battle for equal rights based on sexuality has been particularly prone to monolithically normativizing discourses. John Grundy and Miriam Smith (2005) observe that in Canada, for example, "LGBT politics are shaped by [the] liberal citizenship regime," with allosexual political organizations such as Egale using "litigation and lobbying" to secure rights such as same-sex marriage for their constituents (p. 393). Queer scholar Gary Kinsman (2001), however, contends that fighting for rights such as access to marriage should not be "the end point of our

struggle," for other forms of oppression in the lives of allosexuals still remain (p. 221; see also Warner, 1999). Bell and Binnie (2000) concur, contending that a right one has never had in the first place does not necessarily mean that a claim to that right is justified (p. 143). What results from a reliance on a discourse of rights to shape sexual citizenship is that, in the end, "[w]e may all be sexual citizens, but we are not *equal* citizens" (p. 143).

What we have seen in Chapter Four, of course, is that when rights become the focal point of allosexual activism, homonationalism, and by extension homonormativity, rears its ugly head. In Quebec, where nationalism based on language, ethnicity, class, and race already influence policy decisions, sexual rights have also been enshrined not only in law, but also in the national imagination. As the only sub-national jurisdiction in Canada with an official anti-homophobia policy (see Justice Québec, 2009), Quebec takes its sexual freedoms very seriously, to the extent that it has given birth to what Sirma Bilge (2012) describes as a "sexual nationalism" (p. 304). Bilge argues that sexual rights have become as much a "core value" of Quebec citizenship as any other right, such that any perceived threats to those rights are dealt with in discursively harsh ways (p. 305).

Religion is considered to be the primary offender in this regard, which is why sexual freedom is inextricably intertwined with secularism in rights talk, producing what Joan Scott (2009) has wittily (and serendipitously) called "sexularism." Quebec's sexularism is captured in a model of secularism borrowed from France known as *laïcité*,[27] which, although spoken of as if it applies to all religions, really targets Muslims

[27] According to Herman T. Salton (2012), *laïcité* as a concept emerged in France "in opposition to the

and, occasionally, Hasidim and Sikhs for scrutiny, as the reasonable accommodation controversy has clearly shown. Among allosexuals, this antagonism towards practitioners of non-Christian religions has been openly expressed in publications such as Montreal-based gay magazine *RG*, which published an editorial by Simon Lajeunesse (2006), who vehemently expressed his fear of homophobes that wore "a turban, a skullcap, or a veil" infiltrating the police force and, thus, posing a threat to gay men like him. Voices such as that of Lajeunesse have become louder over the years—so much so that homonationalism has become practically inseparable from "ordinary" Quebec nationalism, leading to a form of racialized governmentality (Bilge, 2013) that has seen organizations such as Fondation Emergence (FE), which is run entirely by White Québécois men, receive copious amounts of funding from the Quebec government for "awareness" campaigns that target a number of different groups including, in 2009, "cultural communities" (Bilge, 2012, p. 308). The fact that FE did *not* invite any REC allosexuals to participate actively in that latter project is evident in the material produced by the campaign.[28]

Catholic Church," though it is applied against religion writ large, as well (p. 30). While *laïcité* has been difficult to pin down legally, Salton argues that it should not be read as having a dialectical relationship to notions of freedom of religion; rather, he says, *laïcité* and religious freedom should be seen as "*complementary to* one another" (author's emphasis) (p. 31). In fact, Salton contends, they cannot even exist without each other in French constitutional law (p. 31).

[28] Full disclosure: Fondation Emergence asked Coalition MultiMundo to sign off on the project without consulting with us on the content of the campaign. As the Co-President of the Coalition at that time, I and my other Co-President were tasked with entering into further discussions with FE in order to secure more participation in the process before we would give our blessing. Our requests were rebuffed, however, and, thus, fearing the kind of potentially racist messages that the campaign would

The law, then, is not "the great equalizer," as one might presume. It can be selective and biased in its treatment of those who turn to it for protection, and it can also be wielded as a weapon by dominant bodies who (mis)use it and abuse it for parochial purposes at the expense of the already-marginalized. Insofar as citizenship is concerned, in other words, equality is contingent rather than automatically guaranteed. To paraphrase George Orwell (1971): All citizens are equal, but some are more equal than others.

Myth #3: We, the People

The third and final myth of citizenship suggests that all members claiming to belong to a particular group—whether that group be social, communitarian, or national—are the same; they are the same not necessarily in the physical sense, but in their attitudes, values, and status, and, hence, how they view and treat each other. In effect, membership is essentialized. Essentialism refers to a mode of identity construction that is founded upon, according to Radha Japphan (1996), "standard Cartesian epistemology," which "pursues knowledge, truth and wisdom almost as if they were external, immutable universals just waiting to be discovered" (p. 19). As such, any complexities that make an individual distinct are evacuated; hence, for example, there can only be one truth about "women's experience" irrespective of the impact of race, sexual orientation, and class, among other social markers (Harris, 2003, p. 34). Essentialism is a mechanism deployed within a given system of power to fix particular social, cultural, political, and economic identities, to reduce them to certain attributes

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give off, we declined to endorse it.

that may or may not be arbitrary, to freeze them in history so that they cannot shift, mutate, or evolve with the passage of time.

Essentialism can function in society such that certain social groups may achieve what Sunera Thobani (2007) would refer to as an “exalted” status—a status that many without membership to those same groups aspire to obtain for themselves. In the context of national citizenship, for example, the “national subject” is the exemplary representation of all that with which the nation is associated: “its values, ethics, and civilizational mores” (p. 3). The national subject then becomes the standard against which all others are defined, including strangers—in Canada’s case, Aboriginals, immigrants, and refugees (p. 5). Such a process “naturalizes” certain ostensibly positive qualities that characterize this kind of subjecthood, concretizing the national “subject’s sense of self and of its belonging in the social world” (p. 10) while concealing “the social relations within which [such] subjects are enmeshed” (p. 9) and “expelling and excluding” all outsiders who lack the same characteristics (p. 11; see also Balibar, 1988/1991b).

So powerful is the allure of this exalted status that many who fall outside of it make extraordinary efforts to gain access to it at the expense of others in the margins, as Thobani (2007) has remarked on immigrants to Canada who, in pursuing this exalted form of citizenship, become just as culpable “in the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples” as the European settlers were and their descendants have been since colonization (p. 16). However, immigrants who manage to attain such citizenship status will find not only that succeeding to do so comes at a price, but also that their membership will never be fully realized; for it is only “the nation’s insiders” who can

truly inhabit such a position, whereas "those who seek inclusion" are only "allowed" to do so by the insiders, and even then are only granted permission after erasing any evidence of their difference (p. 20), thereby making membership "conditional" (Jiwani, 2006, 2011). Yet, as the earlier analysis of Kymlicka's (1995) and Taylor's (1993) theories have demonstrated, erasing one's difference is an impossibility for the outsider in a liberal democracy. Thus, even if outsiders are able to access the exalted status of citizenship, they will still remain in the shadow of the insiders guarding the gate, always close, but never allowed full admittance.

Exaltation, then, is a normativizing process; it positions a certain segment of the citizenry as the pinnacle of citizenship, and defines those who fail to meet its standards as abnormal, as Other. One of the primary ways it does this is through racial hegemonization. Whiteness, in particular, has been a ubiquitous discursive presence in this regard. Richard Dyer (1997) notes that in racial imagery in the West, White people have been positioned as "just people," the "human norm," whereas all non-Whites are raced (p. 1). Such a position gives White people an enormous amount of power. As Dyer contends,

> There is no more powerful position than that of being "just" human. The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity. Raced people can't do that—they can only speak for their race. But non-raced people can, for they do not represent the interests of a race. (p. 2)

Consequently, Dyer observes, the White subject, through White discourse, determines the existence of the non-White subject, who is prevented from simply *being* on its own terms (p. 13). Zeus Leonardo (2002) concurs, arguing that to White subjects, their own whiteness legitimizes their obliviousness of the everyday racism around them (p. 32). This wilful ignorance—even denial (Jiwani, 2006)—offers White people a means of

gaining and maintaining the benefits and privileges that such racial dominance affords them (Leonardo, 2002, p. 32).

Whiteness as a normative discourse can infiltrate many different social groups. As Dyer (1997) points out, "Whiteness generally colonises the stereotypical definition of all social categories other than those of race. To be normal, even to be normally deviant (queer, crippled), is to be white" (p. 12). The homonationalist discourse outlined earlier in Chapter Four is the epitome of this form of Whiteness, whereby queer activists becoming complicit with U.S. imperialist projects by speaking out against the "sexual repression" of racial others (Puar, 2007). A similar phenomenon frequently occurs among women, too, as anti-racist feminist theorists such as Anne McClintock (1995), Yasmin Jiwani (2006), and Sherene Razack (1998) have noted, such that White women will characterize non-White women as oppressed by their "culture" and in need of rescue. These examples—emblematic of what Paul Gilroy (1991) refers to as "the new racism" and Balibar (1988/1991a) as "neo-racism"—demonstrate that when conceptualizartions of Whiteness are aligned with nationalism, it becomes virtually impossible to view and treat the Other as anything but the Other.

Such exclusions are not only prevalent in discourses of Whiteness and nationalism, however. Any type of social group can exhibit some form of Othering. Davé et al (2000) says that attempts at uniting Asians politically in the U.S. often results in the exclusion of South Asian Americans. Renowned social and political critics such as Patricia Hill Collins (2005; 2000/2009), bell hooks (2000), and Cornel West (2001) decry the subjugation of Black women by Black men in the U.S. Meanwhile, Christopher James (1996) has brought attention to the effacement of bisexuals in queer

theory, whereas Omar Minwalla, B. R. Simon Rosser, Jamie Feldman, and Christine Varga (2005) have drawn attention to the dynamics of exclusion racialized gay Muslim men experience in Western allosexual contexts. And in his critique of a more subtle and complex oppression, Ian Barnard (1999) takes queer theorists such as Steven Epstein (1987) to task for attempting to equate sexual difference with ethnic and racial difference:

> To postulate queers as a "race" is not only to fix sexuality by a logic antithetical to the productive potential of the meaning of "queer", [*sic*] but also to analogize sexuality and race in a manner that seeks to compare and even equate non-congruent orders of identity and oppression (homophobia and racism), an undertaking that usually results in the occlusion of white gay racism and the erasure of the identities of queers of color, two sites where sexuality and race do not work along parallel but separate logics. (p. 199)

As the above examples demonstrate, the apparent coherence and cohesion of a given social group's identity belies the processes of exclusion that are always already taking place beneath the surface. The belonging-ness that one may experience as a member of a particular group is more than likely a false feeling.

In Quebec, most if not all of these manifestations of identity politics are present, though in ways through which they have become entangled with the fantasy of Quebec identity writ large. For example, Robert Schwartzwald (1993) and Elaine Pigeon (2001) have both shown how Quebec *indépendantistes* have construed non-heterosexual sexualities as obstructive and damaging to the nationalist cause, while Jeffery Vacante (2005) has written about how Quebec's own version of "compulsory heterosexuality" (Rich, 1992) has effaced the existence of allosexuals entirely from the "national" (Vacante's quotation marks) history of Quebec. And, of course, as we have already seen, the reasonable accommodation debate probably exemplifies this entanglement most

palpably, personified by what I have referred to elsewhere as "The Reasonable *Québécois*" (Wong, 2011). Such a figure has not been constructed overnight; it has been cultivated from a "wound" of Otherness that Quebec nationalists have continually reified since New France's defeat by the British on the Plains of Abraham in 1759 (Létourneau, 2004)[29] and politicized through the Quiet Revolution by nationalist intellectuals from then to the present. One could argue that the Reasonable *Québecois* already gave its national performance in the guise of its precursor, "*le nègre blanc*," or "White nigger," who was introduced to Quebec audiences and beyond in 1968 by Pierre Vallières in his book *Nègres blancs d'Amérique*, in which he

> compared the plight of French Canadians with African Americans, arguing that its poor had historically toiled like Black slaves and confronted racial discrimination at the hands of English Canadians, while being culturally oppressed and economically exploited by both English Canada and the US [*sic*]. (Austin, 2010, p. 24; see also Maclure, 2003; Hurley, 2011; Mills, 2010)

Needless to say, this personification of separatist rage and sorrow, Austin (2010) points out, "ignor[ed] the lived reality of Québec's real 'nègres'—Québec's then small but increasingly vocal black population" (p. 23). Like the queers who attempted to analogize queerness with race and ethnicity, Québec nationalists such as Vallières have appropriated the image (or nightmare) of disenfranchised blackness for themselves, failing to recognize their own role in racial oppression. It would appear that narrating the nation (Bhabha, 1990), or any other site of citizenship, is fraught with a "we-ness" that borrows, even plunders, from Others in what is touted as an expression of empathy, but is simply another means of subjugation.

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[29] McAllister (2011) sees this fixation on "historical wrongs" as a form of victimhood that "grants survivors a sense of moral righteousness that justifies imperialistic nation-building projects" (p. 14)

The myths of citizenship outlined above work together discursively to shape one's sense of belonging or non-belonging to an imagined entity such as a nation or a community. As myths, they are deceptive; they structure our notions of normative citizenship, which Tom Hall and Howard Williamson (1999) define as "our hopes for a shared existence as free and equal members of a community, *beyond any actually existing arrangements*" (my emphasis) (p. 3). Life as it is actually lived and experienced is masked by the polity's phantasmic investment in normative citizenship. Marginalized subjects know this all too well, for it is their lives that are the most deeply obscured, restrained from rising up from the murk to take their place alongside the privileged, who germinate and cultivate the fantasy, because to do so would taint the "purity" of the vision of citizenship. As with any fantasy, however, "reality" will inevitably find a way to intrude on the proceedings, bringing with it impurities that trouble the power of the norms so that new possibilities of belonging are exposed. This becomes especially apparent when the discourse of normative citizenship is refracted through the prism of intersectional existence as lived by my narrators. By disidentifying with normative citizenship on many different levels (community, city, nation), these REC allosexuals establish spaces for themselves that are singular, yet social. They resist reciting the dominant narratives of citizenship that the majoritarian sphere has forced upon them; instead, they *incite* their own narratives informed by their own histories and epistemologies. Although the myths of citizenship are embedded in the lives of my narrators, those same myths also fuel these activists' disidentificatory responses to them, as their stories in the next section will show.

Chapter Five

Citizenship Disidentifications

Part B – Stories of Lived Citizenship

I am what I am *Take it or leave me alone*

Rosario Morales (1981, p. 15)

* * *

The myths of citizenship, as we have seen in the previous section, contribute to the fetishization of citizenship in both legal and normative forms. These forms, however, do not take into account the countless ways that people actually *live* their citizenship in their day-to-day lives. The notion of "lived citizenship" is one theorized by British scholars Tom Hall and Howard Williamson (1999), who define it as "the meaning that citizenship actually has in people's lives and the ways in which people's social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances affect their lives as citizens" (p. 2). "Meaning" is key here, for it suggests that belonging is more than simply an emotional bond; according Michael L. Hughes (2006), meanings "provide people with purpose, significance, validity and coherence for their actions and also provide a basis for social relationships and social integration" (p. 615). Therefore, to live one's citizenship is to become aware and make sense of its real effects on one's existence.

A meaningful citizenship, then, is not about aspiring to some fantastic status that is unachievable to most of us (or if such a status is achieved, it is found to be empty and bloodless); rather, citizenship to the vast majority of the world is about personal

experiences (both positive and negative), interactions with others, and knowledge gained in moving and evolving through space and time. Citizenship as it is lived is not “fixed” or static, but “fluid” and ever-changing (Lister, Smith, Middleton, & Cox, 2003, p. 251) as well as “multi-faceted and multi-dimensional” (Williamson, 2003, p. 18). We may think of it as an epistemology that is singular to each and every one of us, enabling the production of a disidentificatory space through which we can trouble the myths of citizenship and blur the line that structures the division between private and public realms, thereby drawing attention to more localized concerns that are usually ignored or dismissed by the state and other institutions as immaterial and irrelevant to the “mainstream debate on citizenship” (Cherubini, 2011, p. 117).

For minoritized subjects, such concerns are commonly related to matters of identity and difference, underscoring the intersectional dimensions of lived citizenship (Cherubini, 2011). Lives lived intersectionally expose the larger structural forces that impact, for example, REC allosexuals in often detrimental and even destructive ways, indicating that normative and legal forms of citizenship are not only classed, raced, and gendered, among others (Hall & Coffey, 2007; Cherubini, 2011), but also complicated by social locations that emerge from the junctures of multiple axes of difference. Despite the power of these institutional forces, however, many of those who live their lives intersectionally, including my narrators, do manage to circumvent, confound, and upset the social order through the performances of their being and their desire to belong. Their respective disidentifications with normative and legal citizenships have become a “practice of everyday life” (de Certeau, 1984) for them. We can say, therefore, that my narrators live their citizenships through their disidentifications.

I now turn to the stories shared by my narrators, relaying first their descriptions of various effects that legal and normative forms of citizenship have had on their lives, followed by their narratives of disidentification.

Ancestral Knowledges and Histories of Colonization

For some of my narrators, experiences of citizenship and belonging are determined by more than just their own histories; the histories of their families and ancestors, often in other parts of the world, also play a critical role, particularly through the transference of different forms cultural, social, and political knowledge—knowledge that helps to ground them in their everyday lives. After all, our bodies carry not only our stories, but "[a]n entire history, an entire vision of the world, a lifetime history" (Trinh, 1989, p. 121). However, what happens if we are riven from that history?

In Diane's case, the consequences have been traumatic, the effects of Canada's colonial past rippling into Their present. As a Two-Spirited mixed-race person of French-Canadian, Black, and Kanien'kehá:ka descent, Diane believes that this trauma has fomented silence and shame among Their family and community, blocking the flow of knowledge from reaching Their generation. One major source of trauma has been Canada's residential school system (see Miller, 2004), which Diane says is responsible for the devaluation and disappearance of Two-Spirit people in colonized North America:

> *Being of Mohawk origin, the Iroquois nations were the first to be in contact with Europeans; therefore, the living history is gone, and those [European] beliefs have had a longer time to instil themselves within our system; and then add to that the residential school years where the whole male dominance was important and instilled upon our young people. […] So anything that deviated from what they considered the norm of sexual expression became condemned, a sin. I've even heard people say things, or I've even read that it was the will of the devil and everything else you can imagine. Then add to that the fact that the men who*

> *returned from residential school had also been sexually abused, and the sexual abuse was [of] the homosexual nature—not necessarily homosexual individuals, but homosexual nature. So it also triggered that trauma that they had and the whole disgust with being touched by someone of the same sex. So the combination of that made the homophobic expression extremely high in our communities.*

With the loss of the Two-Spirit role, a once-important and esteemed position in the community came to be viewed as abnormal and abominable; henceforth, Diane and people like Them were unable to express themselves in a way that felt natural to them, either in body or in language:

> *It was a language that was not spoken because of the hiding and the shame. […] When I became more established in Kahnawake, it became a source of sadness, so a constant reminder that it's really too bad that there was a time that was lost in previous generations in terms of recognition of who they were culturally that impacted on me and also impacts on my children to a certain extent.*

From generation to generation, evidence of Diane's Native heritage was slowly vanishing, overwhelmed by the discursive and material power of Occidentalism originating from French and British colonization.

This colonialism has not been limited to Turtle Island,[30] of course; like a virus, its reach has been widespread. In Southeast Asia, it infected Val's mother, who, Val believes, has accumulated so much shame from growing up in conditions wrought by colonialism that she, like Diane's elders, has refrained from imparting her linguistic knowledge of her native Chinese dialect, Hokkien, to her daughter. Val attributes this shame to the political economy of survival in post-colonial Southeast Asia, since for people such as Val's mother who grew up poor, learning the English language was considered to be the only route out of a life of poverty. Consequently, "Native"

[30] Numerous First Nations people refer to North America as Turtle Island in recognition of traditional aboriginal creation stories (see Kurt, 2007).

languages such as her mother's, Val believes, became stigmatized as "simple" due to their association with poverty, thereby compelling non-English speakers to dissociate themselves from their mother tongues.

Meanwhile, Val's father, who arrived in Canada in the 1970s after escaping from then-Communist-ruled Eastern Europe, is described by Val as a man who is very proud of his Slavic roots, continually encouraging his daughter to speak his native tongue. Having left his country under entirely different circumstances from those of Val's mother, Val's father is not burdened by the same sense of colonial shame that has afflicted his wife. Still, Val's suspicion that her father has not been as forthcoming in sharing his knowledge as she would like was recently confirmed through a brief exchange with him:

> *Only when I was 20 did he tell me that it touched him more and he found it warmer whenever I called him "Tata," which is "Dad" in [my father's language], than if I called him "Dad." And I was like, why didn't you raise me calling you "Tata"? And he was like, "Well, you know, you're in Canada. It's not the word that people use here." And so there's this willingness to erase things that are so precious to their identity because they're not in their home space. They feel like they don't even have the right to even ask that of their daughter, which is so crazy.*

Likewise, Jean-Pierre's parents used pragmatism as an excuse for favouring English and French over Chinese and Vietnamese in their household:

> *My parents told me that English and French was just okay because that's what I needed. Look, in the early '70s/late '60s, we weren't talking about you needed more languages. The prerequisite was you knew English, period, in those years. So my parents, the only preoccupation they had is you have to learn English. Learning a third language—what I relate to be Asian—I had to go by myself and try to learn it. And it is very difficult [when] your parents didn't speak that language with you. We were speaking French at home.*

Although not directly affected by British or French colonialism, as immigrants to Canada, Val's father and Jean-Pierre's parents still felt their residual effects, which

pressured them—via a discourse of functionality—along with those directly affected by colonialism, to conform to the standards set by the colonizers for all persons they "accepted," "welcomed," and "allowed to stay" on "their" land by shaming them into submission; their children then inherited this shame through absence—the absence of knowledge they did *not* receive. Sara Ahmed (2004) notes that shame functions according to a "double play of concealment and exposure," whereby "[o]n the one hand, shame covers that which is exposed (we turn away, we lower our face, we avert our gaze), while on the other, shame exposes that which has been covered (it un-covers)" (p. 104). Thus, in their acts of silence and concealment around key aspects of their ancestral heritages, Val's, Jean-Pierre's, and Diane's elders have only made the absence of these traditions more pronounced, which has, in turn, left Diane, Jean-Pierre, and Val unable in their present lives to connect with their own histories—histories that could be vital to their sense of identity and belonging—while simultaneously experiencing an aching and urgent need to do so.

Not all of my narrators' parents responded to the racially consumptive power of colonialism in this way, however; some were strongly opposed to the social and cultural influences of the North/West. For example, Kanwar's father was confronted with much racism after he and Kanwar's mother immigrated to Canada, with the former frequently being racially profiled due to his visibility from "wearing a turban and full beard" as one of the few Sikhs in Montreal. The racism reached crisis proportions, though, when Kanwar's father, wrongfully accused in the bombing of Air India Flight 182 in 1986,[31]

[31] Air India Flight 182 travelling from Montreal to New Delhi via London, UK, exploded mid-air over the Atlantic Ocean on June 23, 1985, due to a bomb, killing all 329 passengers and crew. Canadian law

was arrested by the RCMP and incarcerated for several months. As a result of this event, Kanwar's parents became

> *[v]ery hypervigilant, very tight on money. At that time, my parents grew more and more paranoid of what North America is, so after this period, they would often tell us a lot about our history, but in such a way that it would reinforce all the positives of this experience that my dad went through with being arrested in our family. So my mom would often tell us, "Never cut your hair. You're a Sikh, you're a Sikh." […] They became more aware of their Sikh-ness, and then they put that in us, as well, and that was a consequence of that time.*

One method Kanwar's parents employed to reify their son's Sikh identity when he was a child was by instructing him to inform his entire class of his Sikh heritage on the first day of school:

> *I was the only Sikh kid in my elementary school for many, many years. But my mom would tell me, "Again, I want you to get up in front of your class and talk about your religion, and tell everybody this is who you are and this is why you do it," and she would give me a script. And so every year I would stand up in front of my class and run through my mummy's script: "I'm Sikh, this is long hair, and this is my religion," and those were the three things, basically. There was no other details.*

While "embarrassing" for Kanwar at first, the interpellation of his identity in this most overt way has not deterred him from continuing to identify as a Sikh into his adulthood. Thus, hegemonic racism had the opposite effect here to that experienced by Val, Jean-Pierre, and Diane in their relationship with their elders.

Similarly, Ed, who is descended from the emperor who created the Korean language in the 13th century and whose father and grandfather survived Japanese colonialism and the Korean War, remarks that Their parents were very persistent about speaking Korean with Them and Their sister as they were growing up so that they

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enforcement blamed Sikh militants for the bombing. An official inquiry into the bombing and the ensuing investigation concluded in 2010 (see Commission of Inquiry, 2010).

"understood what it meant to be Korean." However, unlike Kanwar, Ed grew to resent Their Korean heritage when They reached adolescence, a reaction They attribute to "internalized racism" (see Chen-Hayes, 2001; Smith, 1997; Ryan, Brotman, Baradaran, & Lee, 2008):

> *I remember we had this hockey thing with my dad. It was like a father-son hockey game, and the entire game I pretended he wasn't my father. And I know it was hurtful for him. But at the time, I wanted my father to be the White father who was perfectly speaking English and inspiring the kids because he was the coach-kind-of-father versus the father who kind of was yelling all the time and couldn't speak English, and I could tell people were judging him, and so I judged him.*

My experiences with my parents are akin to those of Ed. When I was a very young child, my father and, especially, my mother made every effort to immerse me in the Chinese language—an enormous challenge in a small town such as Deep River, which counted only five Chinese families among its population. By using flash cards and, later, sending me to Chinese school on Saturday mornings after we moved to Mississauga, my parents became militant about boosting my Chinese language skills. I resisted, however; the last thing I wanted to do at that age was expose my difference. I managed to cheat my way through Chinese school and only spoke English at home, which particularly upset my mother, since her English was so limited. Like Ien Ang (2001), who as a child bristled every time non-Asians asked her to speak Chinese, I did not want my Chinese-ness to define me. I wanted to fit in; but my parents were a constant reminder that I would never have that feeling. I felt ashamed to have Chinese parents, to speak Chinese, to have Chinese features—to *be*, simply, Chinese at all.

Unlike Kanwar, who quickly recovered from the embarrassment of performing his Sikh-ness, Ed and I internalized our embarrassment, which festered into shame. And unlike the residual shame that Val, Jean-Pierre, and Diane inherited from their elders, the

shame that Ed and I carried was of our own making. Yet the results were the same; we have grown up into adulthood detached from our cultures of origin, and only now are we able to recognize this absence in our lives. The epistemic violence that erupts from the shame structured by colonialism is, in the end, an anti-performance, in the sense that the enactment of the present works teleologically towards the erasure of the past.

Colonial violence is not merely epistemic; it can also be material, physical—aggressively so, as Alex can attest. As a youth in Rwanda, Alex was enthralled by the European culture he was exposed to by the Belgian colonizers, to the extent that he became dismissive of African culture. Watching television, he would see "advanced" European cities such as Brussels and Paris, and gradually came to see himself as "advanced" because he appreciated what he saw on the screen, to the extent that

> *I started developing what I was calling "White people's sense," and feeling that I have Black skin, but I'm as White as anyone because—I want to do what they did. […] So my way of considering the world was very White-ish because White people was the model, and they are the ideal for me.*

The allure of North/West Whiteness became an all-consuming fantasy for Alex, to the degree that his sole desire was to move to Europe for university and integrate into Northern/Western life. His opinions changed, however, after he was arrested when he, as the disc jockey for his school's radio station, innocently and naïvely played a song by a Tutsi singer because, he says, "I didn't know all those differences," adding:

> *[W]hen the tension started at school the priest and the headmaster tried to find out the reason why there was this tension; and he came to the conclusion that I was part of people that brought that tension at school, and the only proof that he had is because I was putting the music of someone who was based in Belgium and who was considered to be Tutsi […] so it was like I was on the side of the enemy. […] They called the police; they came, and they arrested me. They put me in prison. I was 17 years old.*

Alex's time in prison is too painful for him to recount to me. However, when I ask him if

he identifies as Hutu and Tutsi, he responds:

> *I believe that [the categories were] created by Belgium when they came in 1920 and they created an identity card in 1932 or 33; and on that card they had to distinguish who is Hutu and who is Tutsi. And for their explanation is that those who are Tutsis are close to or looking like the King—because Rwanda was a monarchy and we had a king—were Tutsis. […] Everybody was different, but making a basis on just the look of people, and going through the country, going "who looks like this, who looks like that," that person could be put as Tutsis or Hutus. So they were very subjective ways of distinguishing people.*

Colonialism demands that people make choices between identifying with the colonizer or the colonized. In Rwanda, the Belgian rulers introduced an arbitrary rift that divided up the Rwandan people and created a new myth of peoplehood based on superficial characteristics, resulting in competition, social stratification, and, ultimately, civil war and genocide. To identify with one or the other mode of belonging was to assume the role of either perpetrator or victim. As one who had been blissfully ignorant of the tensions building around him, Alex paid a heavy price in the end, as he was persecuted, then thrust into a state of statelessness with no rights, forcing him into a desperate search for any place that would accept him. Eventually, he was accepted as a refugee Canada.

As the foregoing stories demonstrate, there is a strong link to be made between Northern/Western colonialism and the fissure rending the past from the present in the lives of my narrators as well as my own. Cut off discursively from their histories because of shame and the silence it carries with it, we have had to navigate our way through the world without all the information we need, making the journey fraught with more challenges to overcome. If we can envision a world in which colonization had never occurred, perhaps indigenous knowledge, tradition, and language would have flowed down through the generations unencumbered, thereby providing a clear route along which we could travel. We would all be able to call ourselves storytellers then.

"An oracle and a bringer of joy, the storyteller is the living memory of her time, her people," says Trinh T. Minh-ha. "She composes on life but does not lie, for composing is not imagining, fancying, or inventing" (1989, p. 125); rather, "It is total knowledge" (Ba [1981], qtd. in Trinh, 1989, p. 126).

Childhood and Adolescence

Living through War

In addition to Alex, all of the other narrators, with the exception of Diane, are either immigrants or children of immigrants to Canada, and with the exception of Alex and Nada, all of them spent their childhood years here. The stories they share about their younger years are universally traumatic, though to varying degrees. As has already been hinted at in his story above, war has had an enormous impact on Alex, who was forced to run for his life when the genocide in Rwanda began:

> *I knew so many times I ought to be killed in Rwanda. They came and they want to kill all my family in the capital where we are living. We left before they came; when they came to kill us, they found no one in the house, and they followed us because we were walking—we had to do 130 kilometres from the capital city. We spent four days on the road, and when we arrived there a month after the killing started again from the rural area where we were. They knew my parents' place, and we had to leave there going to nowhere.*

Nada also experienced war first-hand, as her childhood home was situated right along the Green Line, a "fictive line" in Beirut separating the Christian and Muslim populations. During Lebanon's civil war, therefore, "every time something happens in Lebanon, it happens here where my building is. We hear everything, we watch everything. […] It's not as if you had [a] choice to live with [war]."

Economic Hardship

Unlike Nada and Alex, the narrators who have grown up primarily in Canada do not have any direct experiences with war, although some, such as Val, Jean-Pierre, and Ed as well as myself, have parents who did. However, several narrators do say that they were raised amidst harsh socio-economic conditions, with Diane and Their family being evicted from their home numerous times in Cornwall due to Their father's "terrible credit," resorting to living in their car at one point, until they moved into a small, uninsulated cottage Their father won in a poker match. Urban renewal forced Jean-Pierre and his family from their affordable home in Montreal's Chinatown, while Ed's parents decided not to have any more children because "it was too harsh economically."

Harsh economic circumstances also forced V's family to make some difficult decisions regarding the children:

> *[M]y grandmother put us with my aunt that was living here and since she was an immigrant—in Haiti she was a doctor or something . . . a big job—like a lot of people, she thought she would have a better life here. So this is not what happened, and I think she was struggling on her own, so I think she decided to put my brother and I up for adoption.*

V's situation did not improve with his adoptive family, however:

> *My family for a long time were kind of broke. […] We got out of it—but for a very long time we were close to la ligne de pauvreté.*[32] *[…] They didn't manage well their money, so they got into a bit of a problem. […] Ça m'a vraiment affecté parce que maintenant j'ai vraiment une peur de manquer de l'argent.*[33]

Bullying

[32] "The poverty line."

[33] "That really affect me because now I have a fear of being broke."

Bullying was another challenge faced by some of my narrators during their youth. Often, the bullying was tied to racism. V says that people in his neighbourhood would call him "chocolate" and tell him to "go back to your country." Jean-Pierre attributes one childhood bullying incident in particular to his racialized difference:

> *I was [chased] across the street because I was Asian—"Oh look! There's a chink!"—And they would start running after me. […] One time, two older guys [...] came up to me and they had this [bi-bi] gun, and they wanted to hurt me if I didn't obey them. So they had me walk [with] my hands up like if I was a thief. […] One of them said, "Oh, we're going to hit him with a lacrosse [stick]." And the other one said, "Oh no, we're not going to [hit] him. We're going to shoot him. We're going to hurt him a little bit." […] That was very traumatizing. Maybe [it was] because I was different—they were White.*

The perpetration of racialized bullying was not limited to White people. Kanwar remarks that he suffered racialized bullying at the hands of other South Asians, as well:

> *I remember when we first moved to Pointe Claire, we had these neighbours who called us Pakis—and they were South Asian, too, so I guess this wasn't a big deal for them 'cause I'm sure they've been threatened by their own parents at one point or another; that's just the way it works.*

Some narrators point to perceived differences around sexuality and gender as the source of their bullying. In her first year of university in Beirut, Nada, who at the time was dating a woman she met at Scout camp, realized that her schoolmates knew about her relationship when she began to find pieces of paper regularly in her locker with messages such as "You fucking whore" and "Fucking lesbian" as well as, on one occasion, a bloody knife along with a note that read, "Be careful, you're next on the list."

As a young boy, Alex found that his diminutive stature coupled with his "soft" demeanour left him vulnerable to bullying on the playground not from other boys, but from girls:

> *Because so many girls were being beaten by guys because they were physically weak, some girls, to see me around them were taking advantage, saying [that] now there was a boy, a guy that they can be stronger than. So they are coming back to me to bite me, to kick me, or to push me aside.*

Other narrators identify their bullying as emerging from the intersections of different sites. At his predominantly White elementary school, Ed felt the sting of both racist and homophobic bullying, which They believe was the result of penchant for crying along with some perceived effeminate behaviour, including bringing copies of *Tiger Beat Magazine* to school in an effort to "make me popular." Conversely, Val, as "one of the only really outspoken women in [her] grade," had to contend with the use of coded—and sometimes not so coded—language by her high school classmates to pick on what they considered to be her masculine image in addition to her lower socio-economic status:

> *[B]eing told things like that I wasn't the kind of girl that popular guys would like because I didn't do "outdoorsy things" and didn't go to outdoors camp to "play Indian," basically, all summer, every summer, meant that I wasn't the type of girl [guys] would like, which was a really convenient way of telling me, "You're not White and you're not rich." [...] And so much class anger started to come out of me at that point. It was just really hard to negotiate. I feel that also one of the ways that I was teased—because I was one of the only really outspoken women in my grade—was to joke that I had a penis; that was one of the really common recurring jokes. Yeah, even the girls were in on it. They would see me in the changeroom and they would go tell people that I had a pouch, so that meant that I had a dick and . . . yeah.*

Survival

Given all that they have endured during their youth, it is not surprising that a number of my narrators characterize that time in their life in terms of survival. Alex shares that survival was very much a physical endeavour as he constantly struggled to secure his next meal while living in exile in Zambia and Zaire immediately after fleeing Rwanda.

Nada, on the other hand, speaks more of surviving the psychological trauma of war, using humour as a means of dealing with the horror she and her family experienced:

> *I remember, we were in Montreal here maybe five or six years ago, and [my friend] Natash and I were invited to this Québécois party, and there was the question, "Oh how was war?" And we started talking and everyone was laughing, and they looked at us and they're like, "Why? What? Is it really traumatizing or are you just making fun of it? How come you laugh about stuff like this?" And we were like, "Because it's in us." I don't know. We lived with that. Everything was a joke. I think it was because it was our only hope, to joke about stuff.*

Other narrators describe their survival in their youth as a battle with their own psyches. Diane, who grappled with depression throughout Their adolescence, told Themself, "This is it—to live. This is what I need to do" soon after the friend with whom They had made a suicide pact died in an accident. Following years of childhood molestation at the hands of a family sexual abuse ring, Kanwar credits his own resilience as a child for enabling him to come out of the experience relatively unscathed. Val buried her nose in books and schoolwork to cope with her depression. And Ed turned to self-reflection to deal with the emotional and psychological effects of bullying on Them:

> *After puberty hit and [psychologically] I could be reflective, that self-reflection was really simply a way that I survived, so that when I could observe what other people were doing or kind of mimic people, or really understand how I needed to act, that that would allow me to survive in White-dominant space and in a heterosexual space.*

Although their childhood and adolescent years were not entirely negative experiences, by any means, the REC allosexuals I interviewed still convey through their stories the pain of traumatic moments from that era that have marked them to this day. Ahmed (2004) cautions against fetishizing such pain, as "the transformation of the wound into an identity cuts the wound off from a history of 'getting hurt' or injured. It turns the wound into something that simply 'is' rather than something that has happened

in time and space" (p. 32). However, unlike the afore-mentioned Québécois *indépendistes* who perform and perpetuate such wounds for political purposes (Létourneau, 2004), my narrators are very much aware of their temporal and spatial positionality in relation to their past pain, which has served them well in identifying these and other forms of disenfranchisement in their adult lives. Disidentifying with that pain—and the source of that pain—became a coping mechanism and a means of survival.

Nationhood and the State

In discussing their thoughts on how their sense of belonging has been affected by discourses of nationhood and the state, my narrators offer a wide array of opinions. Most of them agree, however, that neither the Canadian nor Quebec government have provided them with any reason to develop a strong bond with "the nation." On a spatial level, for example, Diane asserts that Aboriginals' tumultuous history with the Canadian government has led to the adoption and performance of some exclusionary practices of their own, whereby those not of, for example, pure Kanien'kehá:ka blood are prevented from settling within the boundaries of the reserve. This is one of the factors that has contributed to Diane and Their partner's decision to live off-reserve:

> *There was a big hoopla at the end of the summer—spring-summer last year, so anybody married to non-Natives were supposed to leave. But they haven't really done anything. The fact of the matter is we could logically live within the territory, but who wants the hassle? […] The fact is that it's who actually created that law: is it really from the Mohawk band from way back or is it something that was interpreted from the federal government?*

The Canadian government's usurpation of land plus its enactment and enforcement of racist policies against Indigenous peoples has led to the onset of a kind of "siege

mentality” (Jiwani, 2007) amongst them; so strongly is their identity tied with the land (Salée, 2004) that they have been compelled to devise rules of membership as a means of protecting the purity and sanctity of the land and, thus, by extension, their sense of self. As Diane’s earlier story about the loss of the Two-Spirited role indicates, when one is removed from the land, the consequences on both an individual and a societal level can be dire.

Like Diane, Kanwar has also seen his life affected spatially by the Canadian state. As mentioned earlier, the wrongful incarceration of his father for the Air India bombing created a sense of paranoia in Kanwar’s family, much of this the result of the constant surveillance under which Kanwar and his family were placed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police: “The environment was very hyper-vigilant, especially for my elders. It was like, ‘If somebody’s following you, just run to school—just run to school, don’t even look!’” For Kanwar’s family, the neighbourhood became like a prison, with “guards” patrolling the streets, surveilling their every move. For Kanwar and Diane, then, interventions by the Canadian state have had material effects on their mobility and locality, limiting their spatial movement and, thus, their ability to attach themselves to particular places.

While Kanwar and Diane were able to see early on in their lives the harmful and destructive power of the Canadian government, Val says that she practically worshipped former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and his vision of Canada when she was younger, mostly because of her father’s own Trudeaumania. So strong were their feelings for him that when Val’s family heard the news that he had died, they set out early “the next morning to Ottawa to pay their respects to his coffin.” As she entered her final years of

high school, Val still held Canada very close to her heart, subconsciously infusing her nationalism with notions of race:

> *When I was 16, I still remember wanting to get a maple leaf tattooed on my tailbone, and that nationalism […] was a way of me gaining Whiteness by being üüüber Canadian and üüüber proud to be Canadian. That was my way of being more White than my White counterparts who were less nationalistic than I was.*

Mixed in with this were romantic notions she had developed around Quebec and its place in confederation, for which she again had her parents to thank:

> *[M]y parents enrolled me at the age of four in French immersion so that I would be able to speak both national languages […]. In a nationalistic sense they were "giving their child to the nation state" as a thank you for letting us be here. And because of that gratitude that my parents had for Trudeau and Trudeau's Canada, I grew up with this responsibility to know French and to have patriotism and to sing the national anthem every day in school with pride. […] I couldn't explain why, but I always kind of identified a bit more with Quebeckers than with "Canadians"—Anglo Canadians—which I think has a lot to do with me not being able to express my minority identity; and knowing that this was another minority, [I was feeling] like, "Hey, maybe you're my people."*

Val carried this sentiment with her when she moved to Montreal for school. Her exaltation of a Quebec-inclusive Canada was challenged, however, after she met her current partner:

> *Quebecness was always really important [to me], but Quebecness within a strong Canadian federalism . . . that was my vision. And dating [my Québécois partner] was very confrontational to that sense of nationalism because he's not very married to Quebec or Canada. He just doesn't care. But then once I expressed some really harsh view of how if Quebec separates, then I hope that all of the Indigenous territories separate, and then that'll show Quebec and then Canada will cut them off from all resources. And then he was like, "What the fuck is with that fucking attitude?" and then [argued], "How is that fair at all?"*

Following this confrontation, Val was forced to reassess her patriotism and her assumptions about her new home province. As a transplant from Ontario, she had no real understanding of what life in Quebec was truly like until she immersed herself in the environment.

Ed, too, changed Their perceptions of Quebec after moving here from Alberta and initiating a relationship with a Québécois man:

> *I don't think I really understood what it was like to live in Quebec until I actually lived here […]. I do think that my understanding of Quebec is very much impacted by the fact that I have partner who's White, Francophone, and doesn't know English very well.*

Val's and Ed's personal relationships with White Québécois men highlight the complex role that everyday life plays in shaping ideas around belonging in Quebec. Val, originally rooting herself to a particular imagining of Canada, finds this sense of attachment to place uprooted dramatically by her interactions with her Francophone partner, while Ed is able to nuance Their views on the province as a result of his day-to-day existence there with Their Québécois boyfriend.

Whereas the distinctness of Quebec from the rest of Canada has been made more apparent to Val and Ed, other narrators have been more apt to conflate the two. Nada feels that "Quebec is Canada" because she has been able to make connections with both Anglophones and Francophones in Montreal, even though she has noticed a "huge difference" between the two linguistic communities. Jean-Pierre views himself as both "a Quebecker" and "a Canadian" and speaks of integration between the two "founding nations." And Alex, though seeing himself more as a Canadian not only because he carries a Canadian passport, but also because people interpellate him as Canadian when he travels, finds that he slowly "learning" to become Québécois, as well.

Indeed, as one seeking asylum in Canada, Alex had an especially positive view of the country when he first arrived at the U.S.-Canada border from New York City, where he had initially landed:

> *I would think, "Even [if] they wouldn't let me inside, I will say to my son and my*

> *grandson, I stepped on the land of Canada." So that small ten metres of crossing the border, being in Canada, it was like this land, this Promised Land, I have stepped on it. I have seen it with my eyes. So no one can say I have never been in Canada. I'm now in Canada. […] So for me it was a victory.*

As Alex and others have discovered, however, state policies, such as those for immigration, do not necessarily put newcomers to Canada on an equal footing with those were born and raised here (see Lee & Brotman, 2011). Hence, the warm feelings for Canada that Alex felt at the border quickly ebbed away once he entered the refugee process, which became a kind of purgatory for him:

> *In those four months [of waiting for my application's approval], I was feeling like the last one of the society. It is not good to feel that you are the least of the society because I had never lived in a situation where I was the least of the least. […] I was feeling that I am really on the bottom of the new society in which I was, and that feeling was not really good for me—and especially [since] I could not know how it would end up. That's why when I meet someone who could say he is a permanent resident or he is Canadian, after he told me, it is like, "Wow, you don't know how lucky you are."*

For the asylum-seeker, being *on* the land is not the same as being *of* the land. As with some roadside attraction, to enter Canada, you need a ticket; it is ultimately up to the vendor to decide, though, whether or not you will be sold the ticket.

Immigration stories such as those of Alex here and of Ed's family from Chapter Four capture the harsh reality greeting immigrants and refugees who are lured to Canada by dreams of liberty and prosperity. Certainly, those in the margins, whether they be newcomers or Canadian-born, quickly realize that the regime of rights that are so often associated with Northern/Western society is not the great equalizer that they expect it to be, as Kanwar's childhood encounter with the RCMP has already shown. Someone is always pushed outside the discourse of rights, which, in turn, excludes that person from the imagining of the nation.

This stratification of belonging has been clearly evident in Quebec in the reasonable accommodation debates detailed earlier. By throwing the spotlight on certain requests by representatives of religions racialized and culturalized into otherness, Quebec's politicians and news media have fabricated a false dialectic wherein the rights requested are deemed "special" and would therefore give those who ask for them more rights than the majority, thereby going against the communitarian ideals of the Quebec nation (see Adelman, 2011). This "genealogy of racism" (Wong 2011), which structures the "Reasonable Québécois" outlined in Part A of this chapter through a process of identification, differentiation, racialization, culturalization, essentialization, nationalization, and mediatization, then reverberates into the social sphere and is inculcated by the general populace, affecting public opinion and, in turn, human interrelations. Nada and Ed make specific mention of this debate in their interviews, providing highly critical comments on the exclusionary work that reasonable accommodation does. As Nada remarks,

> *I found myself re-isolated in a way […]. Reasonable accommodation made a very big debate and all that, and we saw a lot of things and people expressing themselves; but after that, things came back to reality, as if everyone went to their corner, and stuff that was said are more pushing people to be racist and homophobic more than anything else. […] [Do] not put the whole fault on the immigrants because immigrants are coming with their cultures and all that—it's not true. […] They're coming also to learn about the other culture and exchange.*

Meanwhile Ed, who admires Quebec for its progressive economic policies, asserts that much more needs to be done on the social front:

> *[T]here is this degree of . . . Quebec nationalism that in some ways can be very progressive because it is kind of pushing back against more conservative ideas that are coming from Anglophone Canada, especially economic policies. But I think in terms of social policies […], there's this heightened degree of racism because part of that idea of what Quebec is as a nation is a very racist idea because it's very much founded on this idea of it being Québécois de souche […]*

> *and I do think that that ends up with things like reasonable accommodation and how Quebec has reacted.*

While Ed also adds that the levels of racism in Quebec are no different from anywhere else in Canada, Their comments do highlight the very particular way that *québécitude* (Létourneau, 2004; Bédard, 200) or *québécité* (Maclure, 2003; Hurley, 2011) has been formulated according to a nationalist ideal marked by race and language, its advocates simultaneously espousing a love for the nation and a fear of the Other who threatens it (Ahmed 2004).

In particular, language, as my story introducing Part A of this chapter demonstrates, can be an important factor in determining one's participation in Quebec society. Unlike me, all of my narrators are perfectly comfortable with speaking French. Still, some do problematize the way the language has been foisted upon minoritized communities. Diane, for example, has conflicting feelings on the matter because while They are proud of Their French heritage, They also understand that the wielding of colonial linguistic power through language policies such as Bill 101, Quebec's infamous French language law,[34] has led to the decimation of Aboriginal languages, which has repercussions for Their Indigenous identity:

> *Language is the element by which you maintain values and promote values from one generation to another. It has everything in it. So on a Mohawk perspective it's very important, on a French perspective it's very important. So on that line of maintaining and preserving a language, I think it's important. However, the tools and the means by which you do it may not necessarily see it as being the best. There, the history of oppression and things like that will come into play and I will*

[34] Bill 101, which was introduced by the Parti Québécois in 1977, established in Quebec law the Charter of the French Language, which included such stipulations as the unilingual usage of French in public institutions, the prioritization of French as the language of instruction in the public education system, and the primacy of the French language on commercial signs (Coleman, 1981).

> *look at it in that light. Certainly, Bill 101 has caused me anguish. Sometimes I feel proud of being able to speak French and know so much about the French culture, and then other times I just feel embarrassed.*

Kanwar, whose third language is French after Punjabi and English, also refers to the pride he possesses in being from Quebec due to the distinct language and culture of the province. However, while he "appreciates" the government's efforts to protect the French language, he does feel that this comes at the expense of the Anglophones, who he says are marginalized. Ed expresses a similar point of view; however, They frame it as an exercise in power relations between the English and the French that swings in both directions, with both the larger White Anglophone and Francophone communities in Quebec each trying to "inferiorize [the other] in order to prop itself up as a better place or a more superior nation."

Regardless of their proficiency in French or English, however, some of my narrators share that their identities are always reduced to race and ethnicity, which positions them outside of both *québécité* and Canadianness. V, for one, states, "I find at the end of the day I'm just Black . . . because it doesn't really matter where you're from because you're racialized already." Alex remarks that because of his Blackness, White people on the *métro* will look at him in such a way that his singularity disappears: "So it's no longer [Alex], it's no longer a Rwandan, it's no longer an African; I represent all Black people everywhere I am, and sometimes it can be heavy."

Jean-Pierre, on the other hand, says that because of his mixed race heritage, "Westerners" he encounters continuously try to guess his origins:

> *Sometime they tell me things, [like] I'm from Japan, I'm from Singapore, I am from The Philippines—I've been named almost all these Extreme Orient*[35] *countries. […] For them I'm exotic. They want to talk to me*

[35] East Asian

> *about China. What do you want me to talk about China? I was never raised in China! I wasn't even born in China! I could talk to you about what I've read in the encyclopaedia, and I could tell you a little bit about the history because I was interested. But don't ask me to tell you how it feels to be Chinese when [I'm] not.*

The processes of racialization and ethnicization that these narrators have involuntarily undergone signal the Whiteness of the nation, whether imagined as Quebec or Canada. Any physical features that do not match the fantasized Whiteness that the Québécois and Canadians are presumed to have indicate to the "native-born" that the person possessing these features must be from elsewhere, from beyond the national boundary.

In terms of sexuality, none of my narrators, with the exception of Diane, suggest that they have had any significant problems with how the state has treated them. However, as the only trans-identified narrator, V does find that the state has not made it easy for him to transition fully to the sex he needs to be, either, with the surgeries and treatments that he needs to become the man he wants and needs to be regulated by the government through the healthcare system, which has decision-making power to determine the costliness of the procedures as well as the mental fitness of trans people such as V. His future as a trans person is thus in the hands of the state, whose neoliberal policies create conditions that make it very difficult to afford and access proper care.

V notes that his life as a trans person is further complicated by his race, a realization that interestingly did not come to him until he started presenting himself as male. As a woman, V was only vaguely conscious of his race; once he started transitioning to his male identity, however, he understood how privileged he had been, in a certain sense, as a Black woman in comparison to his experiences as the man he was in the process of becoming. As a Black woman, White, middle-aged men would treat him

as an exotic beauty; conversely, as a Black man, he noticed that people were looking at him differently, monitoring his movements more closely in places such as stores:

> *So for me, that's when I started to realize, "Oh, okay! People are not too kind to Black men in society." [...] The way that the police look at me is very different. So before, when I used to be very feminine, I could talk back to the police; now I'm like, "You talk to the police. Me, I'm just going to run the other way. Okay, bye!" I'm not getting into a fight with the [police]. So my relationship with the police is more different. I feel like now they actually—like, when I wear certain things . . . I have this big hip hop coat, so when I wear it during the winter, you see that the police kind of look at me [and] make sure that I'm not up to nothing good.*

Being trans is enough of a challenge for V to deal with in his daily life; however, that challenge is further intensified when race is factored into his situation, drawing attention to the ways that different forms of exclusion intersect and interlock. Positive perceptions of V when he was a Black woman, based on fantasies of exoticized beauty, have given way to more negative perceptions when he began to resemble a Black man, causing him to become, like Kanwar and his family, the subject of racial profiling and policing due to stereotypes around black male criminality. In other words, whereas V's once-female Black body was considered an object of value by mainstream society, in his Black male body he is now the object of scorn and surveillance.

Citizenship at the level of nationhood and, by extension, peoplehood is highly contingent. Markers such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation determine how one is accepted into such discourses of belonging. For the REC allosexual activists I interviewed, a variety of technologies of oppression and exclusion have been applied to their bodies to cast them out of the national imaginary. These same technologies follow them into Montreal, a more localized site of belonging, as well.

Montreal

When initially describing their perspectives on Montreal, my narrators all speak of it glowingly in relation to their sense of belonging. Nada says she "never wanted to live anywhere else," attributing her fondness for it to its linguistic diversity, its proximity to nature, and its relatively small size, which gives it the feel of a "village." Diane also refers to the plurality of languages as a key selling point, as well as the city's architecture and multiculturalism. Val speaks of the memories she has accumulated over her years of living here, which she links to the sense of home that Montreal gives her.

Alex, who originally saw himself more as an African than as a Montrealer in his early years here, changed his mind following his first visit back to Africa after fleeing the civil war in Rwanda:

> *[W]hen I came back from these experiences in Africa, that's how I realized that I'm a Montreal man, that Montreal is my home. When I was at Trudeau Airport, when I took this taxi to my place, I was really feeling like I'm back home, and I started seeing Montreal in a different way.*

To my narrators as well as me, Montreal represents what Sara Ahmed (2010) calls a "happy object," as something that "good feelings are directed toward," that "provid[es] a shared horizon of experience" (p. 21). This does not mean, though, that their experiences in the city have been devoid of oppression. Its position with the Northern/Western context of Quebec and Canada ensures that many of the same discourses of belonging and exclusion are perpetuated at the urban level. For example, in Alex's story about the first time he arrived in Montreal in July 1998, he remarks that the city was defined by its Whiteness:

> *There was a lot of Whites everywhere, so I said, "Yeah, now I am really in Montreal. Now I'm really in a country of White people" […] 'cause that's what I was seeing through my window, in the bus, in the cars that was passing.*

For some of my narrators, this Whiteness has cultivated different racist effects. Val describes the racism in rather general terms:

> *I'm not so sure that others would identify me as a Montrealer, especially if they are White Francophone-French descent Quebecker[s]. [My partner] and I had some heated conversations with some of his friends about that. It's like, "No, we absolutely would!" and I'm like, "Listen, I've experienced way too much racism in this province for you to tell me that other people whole-heartedly feel like I belong here."*

Other narrators provide more specific stories. For example, a few years ago, Nada was making a documentary about Muslims. When she approached potential sponsors in Montreal to donate funds to help finance events for the film, she met much resistance, with one sponsor stating:

> *"I don't want to know anything about this!" And I'm like, "Why?" And they're like, "I mean, it's because it's a very sensitive subject." And I'm like, "And? Don't you want to remove all the perceptions people have about those religions and just focus about people—how people are living with their religions, with their cultures, with their whole life?"*

Alex, meanwhile, has had to contend with obstacles in Montreal derived from his ambiguous status as a refugee:

> *I always say as a joke to my friends that there's a big difference between [...] un visa de visiteur et un visa de permanent: a visitor, when he comes, he goes to Old Montreal, he goes to the Mountain,[36] he will see things, he will go and eat in one or two restaurants, he will say hi to one or two people, if he's lucky he will get some sex, and then he'll leave the country happy, saying, "Montreal people are so good, are so nice. I love Montreal!" Those are the ones who have the visitor's visa. When you come with a permanent visa, you don't go to Old Montreal, you don't go to the Mountain; the first place you go is in a manufacturer, you have to enter in agencies, you have go inside and do your CV and not be called and be frustrated. So that's a permanent resident's visa.*

I experienced my own personal encounter with racism in the city after publishing an article on the reasonable accommodation debate and the 2007 Quebec election

[36] Nickname for Mount Royal Park, Montreal's largest public park.

(Wong, 2011), in which I argued that the combination of campaigning politicians and the media's coverage of the events that inspired the debate exacerbated the racist elements of the debate in Montreal and Quebec. After the article was published, an acquaintance in my university's communications department told me he wanted to promote the article, and I gave him my blessing. Thus, a press release went out over the wire publicizing what I had written. Immediately afterwards, a journalist from *Maclean's Magazine* in Canada posted a response on that publication's website, criticizing the content of the article and comparing me unfavourably to former *Globe and Mail* reporter Jan Wong—who is not related to me—based solely on our common last name. In effect, this Maclean's journalist, who is Francophone, used racism to decry what he contended was my depiction of the Québécois as racists, conveniently ignoring the fact that I was criticizing institutions and not people. In adhering to what Jiwani (2006) calls a "discourse of denial," this journalist ultimately reinforced and added to the racism he himself was refuting.

Sometimes even when sincere attempts are made to make minoritized subjects feel welcome, the results can ultimately backfire, as Kanwar discovered one day when he entered his gym class in elementary school:

> *I remember once a gym teacher of mine for some reason thought that I was always feeling lonely because I was the only one like me, as if I was the elephant from [the film] Ice Age. But he had the whole gym class wear little turbans, and then I was late for class on purpose because he asked the teacher to hold me back, so I showed up, and he thought this would be very sweet, and I guess it was—I mean, the thought was there. So I came into gym class and everyone's wearing a turban like me. And they weren't allowed to laugh. […] And then so I came in and looked at everybody, and I said, "What is this?"*

While his teacher's heart was in the right place, the plan he devised to help Kanwar feel less isolated did not serve those intentions well at all. The gym teacher, by focusing and

relying on a key aspect of Kanwar's Sikhness, transformed it into a visual stereotype, evacuating it of its religious and cultural context and turning his students into the South Asian equivalent of Blackfaced minstrels.

In addition to the experiences of racism in Montreal detailed above, V notes that transphobia has been a reality for him in the city—so much so that he has frequently felt threatened in public:

> *I feel here, people are constantly looking at me—really their focus is, like, zoom!—and then after that, they stop until I get out of their sight. So I was really pictur[ing] Montreal as this open city where I was going to be safe. And no, I was more safe as being gender variant in the States than I was here in Montreal. People became really aggressive with me. […] I was destabilized because people were being aggressive, being physically threatening—like, somebody was wanting to get into a fight with me several times. I got followed by a group of young men; in the métro, somebody wanted to have a fight with me. Another time I was biking and this guy wanted to pick a fight with me. […] So I started to realize that as a gender-variant person, I cannot walk certain places, I cannot dress a certain way, so I started to be aware of those limitations.*

V finds that even in the more localized region of his neighbourhood, he experiences a great deal of discomfort from the reactions of those around him to his presence, which is having a negative impact on his own tolerance for others:

> *People really stare at me. But maybe they're just staring in general at people, so I don't wanna become paranoid and be like, "Oh, they stare at me. I'm the only one like that." But I do look different; I have a septum piercing, I'm very androgynous. So when you look at me, there's a lot of things going on there. But it's important for me because right now where I live [is] starting to make me more intolerant. […] [I]ls me regardent, puis on a des interactions un peu bizarre, puis moi, je suis comme, "Ah ouais, je veux rien savoir d'eux." Mais je pense que, au contraire, à place de me retirer je devrais plus essayer de comprendre leur realité—pas juste au gens noir, sud-africain tout, mais juste en*

> *générale; ça serait quelque chose que j'aimerais plus comprendre*[37] *. . . because where I live all the immigrants are really close-minded. But why? What's the difference?*

As V's story suggests, certain neighbourhoods in the city have become sites of oppressive experiences, transphobia being one such manifestation. The result is that V is starting to develop his own feelings of intolerance for his neighbours, who are mostly immigrants and racialized people, as well—a fact he recognizes, thereby spurring him to reflect on and gain an understanding of the reasons for their reactions and his own response to them.

The *Village Gai* is a neighbourhood specifically mentioned by a couple of my narrators as an oppressive area of the city. While one might ordinarily assume it to be a safe space for REC allosexuals, Ed and Kanwar both paint it as an unwelcoming site for racialized people as well as others who do not fit the homonormative image of the well-heeled White gay male. Ed characterizes the area as "not necessarily a space that's safe for queer people of colour" due the dominance of older gay White men, blaming much of the discrimination against the former as well as women and trans people on the political economy of the Village, which favours those with the financial resources to spend at its businesses. Kanwar, meanwhile, refers to the racially-based "hierarchy of beauty" as a defining feature of the Village:

> *You could put "fit" right at the top; but then "fit white" right at the top. If you're fit and black, right at the top, but then it's fetishized; and then it goes lower on from there. If you're like "average coloured" and have something slightly*

[37] "They look at me, then we have some rather bizarre interactions, then I'm like, "Oh yeah, I want nothing to do with you." But then I think that I should try harder to understand their reality—not just all Black Africans from the South, but just in general; that would be something I would like to understand…"

> *deviant about you—in the sense that you're non-normative in any respect—it's game over, in the sense that you're not going to be, let's say, marketable in the Village.*

This comments brings to mind Richard Fung's (1996) observation that "[r]ace is a factor in even our most intimate relationships" (p. 182). Ed and Kanwar both stress, however, that the racism in Montreal is just as likely to come from Anglophones in Montreal and the rest of Canada as Francophones, though Kanwar says the racism takes different forms, such that he "appreciates Québécois overtness" over "the subtle racism" of Anglophones. And while the media's coverage of the reasonable accommodation controversy has indelibly etched into people's minds the image of Montreal and Quebec as Islamophobic, Ed points out that that racism against Muslims is just as prevalent "in British Columbia or Alberta."

In spite of this racism, though, Ed has been encouraged by the way that people in Montreal and the province as a whole have evolved in recent years in their recognition and acknowledgement of some of the racism taking place in their midst—much of it a result, ironically, of nationalist policies such as Bill 101:

> *I think one thing that [Bill 101] has done is that it's made Francophones in Quebec face their own racism because now there are people of colour who are Francophone first and Anglophone second, or Allophone, Anglophone third or fourth, who are standing up and saying, "Look, what you said was racist, what you did was racist." There's a lot of White Francophone Quebeckers who are starting to see the racism and see how Quebec can be racist systematically, and I think that all of those things have made a difference. At least in Montreal, I can feel this sense of consciousness-raising within Francophone circles, which has been really interesting because I've only been here for four years, but I do feel that, and I do feel like it's going to grow because the racialized groups that are French-speaking first are going to grow, as well.*

In searching for spaces to belong and in which to invest themselves emotionally, REC allosexuals in Montreal can encounter some tough barriers. They are already met

by racism, classism, sexism, and heteropatriarchy in the broader society; yet, when they attempt to seek admittance into ostensibly safe spaces such as the *Village Gai*, they often come up against some of the very same bigotry from which they have been trying to seek refuge. Thus, claiming space in the city is a performative move that relies heavily on both material and discursive power and privilege, making it extremely difficult for those without it to secure a place of belonging to call their own. Ed does think that the social environment in the city is improving; still, it appears that there is still a long way to go, especially if one takes into account the various modes of oppression taking place at the community level.

Community

The idea of community as we imagine it, according to Bauman (2001), "is a 'warm' place, a cosy and comfortable place" (p. 1) in which "we can count on each other's good will" (p. 2); as such, community provides us with security. The hard truth of the matter, however, is that the "really existing community" is

> a collectivity which pretends to be community incarnate, the dream fulfilled, and (in the name of all the goodness such community is assumed to offer) demands unconditional loyalty and treats everything short of such loyalty as an act of unforgivable treason. (p. 4).

This is the reality of community that my narrators have had to confront and contend with their entire lives; citizenship at this intimate level regulates community through just as many rules of membership as within the larger spheres of urban and national citizenship. To remain loyal, one must not challenge the *status quo*; yet, as REC allosexuals, my narrators confront this challenge simply by existing, thereby making them vulnerable to injury through both discursive and material acts of violence.

Acts related to heterosexism and transphobia within their cultural and racial communities have been a primary source of anguish for some of my narrators. Diane, for example, encountered sexuality-based discrimination on the reserve in Kahnawake, with one specific incident underlining the rift within the Kanien'kehá:ka community over non-heteronormative identities. One year while working as a Grade Six teacher at a school on the reserve, Diane and Their partner experienced a series of losses of friends and family, which created a great deal of stress in their lives, culminating in Diane's decision to take a medical leave from work:

> *My doctor had written the report to the school board mentioning that my friends had died of AIDS […]. And when they got word—fear. One, my lifestyle became an issue, and then, "Oh my God, she's going to contaminate our kids!" And I got fired. I had to fight; and so I was re-instated, but not in my original job, and I was hidden away in the school. But at that point it became an issue because I was going to work and there was people gagging and doing all these gestures. I had to park my vehicle far away from school because it was being damaged. Horrible calls at home. Just a whole period of horror at the time.*

Because of the inadvertent disclosure of Their sexual orientation, the work environment Diane occupied became an unsafe space, to the extent that They had to leave not only the school, but the reserve. Here, the violence had a material as well as psychological effect, as Diane lost Their job because of Their sexual and gendered difference.

For V, the impact of transphobic encounters with Black men has also assumed both psychological and material forms, as he frames his oppression in terms of physical security:

> *[R]ight now I don't feel safe with Black male[s]. […] I have to be really mindful of how I act and what I say and kind of put myself not in a position where je vais me faire comme battre ou je vais me faire comme, "Et toi? P'koi t'es comme ça?"*[38] *I have people that come up to me and say, "Why do you look like this? Why do you have this [stud] in your nose?" Going to my friend's barbecue, this man came to see me and was like, "Why are you dressed like this? Why do you*

[38] "…I have to fight or say, 'And you? Why are you like that?'"

> *look like this? Are you a faggot? Because you look like one and blah, blah, blah."*

Ed describes Their relationship with the Korean community in terms of alienation, remarking that the way They expressed Their gender as a youth through effeminate behaviour and constant crying did not make Them many friends. Ed is now able to rationalize some of the reasons for Their isolation, citing the fact that "the Korean community around me didn't have access to understanding sexual identity or gender identity [because] they didn't have access to anti-oppression workshops or anti-homophobia workshops." He is less forgiving, however, when discussing his treatment as an Asian man by older gay White men:

> *There was this one time there was this one 40-year-old gay White guy who was relatively attractive, but he had a boyfriend. And he would screw me in the car outside of the house that his boyfriend and him were living in. […] It was just very exploitative because I was in a vulnerable place, and I was very isolated, and I think he knew that and he was just taking advantage, which is what really gross old White gay guys do to younger gay Asian guys when they feel like they're vulnerable. […] That level of exploitation that happens between older gay White guys and younger gay Asians is very violent, I think, and abusive. I think it's horrible.*

Kanwar, too, opines on the state of race and dating in the allosexual community, though he partly attributes this to more systemic causes:

> *I liked White guys for a while, and the thing is this isn't reciprocated very often. Why? Because we're not in media—I'm not in media; faces like mine, they're not there, right? […] Usually [with] pictures of non-Whites [on Internet chat sites]—I'm going to say "non-Whites" because we're used to seeing White people in pictures—I feel like a lot more negative connotations get tagged onto that, as opposed to meeting somebody in person.*

Overall, Kanwar thinks that racialized people are not treated as equals in the allosexual community:

> *I do feel like there's a lot of racial lines that are clear within the gay community. It's so interesting because I think the gay community has the highest ratio of*

> *interracial couples; but there's still like a segregating within the gay community going on, which doesn't sit well with me.*

Jean-Pierre felt this segregation when he first made contact with the allosexual community as a teenager:

> *It was a struggle to me inside the gay community. They made me feel different. And they had problems with ethnics because [the former are] part of the majority. […] It was very difficult to mix or try to meet someone who wasn't a Westerner. It just emphasized the stereotype or stereotyping I had inside me saying, "Oh, I am just different, and you keep reminding me I'm different, and I don't want to be different, I just want to be part of them." […] It just mixed me up more, so eventually all you had to do is [tell yourself], "Okay, you're just different. You don't have to do what the other people do. Just be gay. And if you do meet, you do meet." […] I felt even more different [in the gay community] because I knew that even in a marginalized oppressed group, I was being put aside also.*

Jean-Pierre's attempts to gain access to community were further complicated by his hybrid ethnocultural and racial identity. As a mixed-race Chinese-Vietnamese-French man, Jean-Pierre initially grew up believing he was White, then later began to identify more with his Asian side. No matter which side of himself he chose to identify with, however, he still found it difficult to be accepted by any group, with Asians telling him, "You're not Asian enough," and Whites telling him, "You're not White." Thus, he says, "I was in the middle, and I had this identity crisis because of that, because I felt even more put away and pushed back."

Like Jean-Pierre, Val has also had to grapple with her mixed-race heritage throughout her life, which has seen her at various times—and often simultaneously—excluded, objectified, racialized, essentialized, exoticized, and privileged, affecting her status in a variety of different communities. As a child, she saw herself as having a certain amount of privilege over other racialized children because of her White father, leading her to believe that she "was close enough to Whiteness to be beautiful." When

she entered high school, however, she suddenly found herself racialized as Chinese, "and *just* Chinese," which effectively, she says, "robbed me of my White privilege." In an effort to combat this racialization, Val attempted to "Whiten" herself through such means as dying her hair and applying make-up. However, her plan was always thwarted by the reinforcement of her Asian-ness by others, especially after she arrived in Montreal:

> *I had this uncanny experience in Montreal where over the course of three months, every single week, one or two people would very forcefully identify me as Asian, and only Asian, and usually it was White older Francophone men who were hitting on me and just sort of guessing where I was from, or just saying, "Ni hao"[39]—shit like that where you're just like, "Oh fuck."*

Adding to this complexity of racial hybridity for Diane is Their Two-Spiritedness, which poses an extra conundrum for Them in the allosexual community:

> *I've always felt out of the loop in every sense. And I think that a lot of it has to do with every part of my identity. My gender identity definitely. […] There's an issue there. So even out of the lesbian community, I feel odd. I had this discussion with [the coordinator of] The Lesbian [Mothers] Association, and I'm like, "I'm not a lesbian!" […] But also because of my heritage. I'm not fully Native, right? I'm of two cultures. And that meant that I didn't belong here, and I didn't belong there. And so always being in-between, for a long time, I think it caused [me] anguish.*

As the foregoing stories indicate, claiming citizenship within a particular community is fraught with different forms of violence: discursive, material, physical, and psychological. REC allosexuals, with their intersecting and hybrid identities, come up against unique hurdles in their search for spaces of belonging. Their attempts to overcome these hurdles ultimately shape their perspectives on home and belonging.

Home and Belonging

[39] "How are you?" in Mandarin Chinese.

Belonging, according to a couple of my narrators, is vital to their emotional and psychological well-being. Val likens belonging to "breathing," while Ed calls it "one of the primary needs we have as human beings." Both see belonging as a necessary means of countering isolation. Placing such importance on belonging, though, means that when one does not achieve it, the ramifications can be quite profound, especially in terms of the way home is viewed. While Val and Alex claim Montreal as home, as mentioned earlier, Ed has difficulty conceiving as any particular place in Their life as home.

Without a feeling of belonging, one can feel lost, like an exile, with painful feelings left as residue. Kanwar thinks that his multiply minoritized status prevents him from attaching himself to any community. Nada offers a similar view, confessing that her inability to belong has had a profound effect on her:

> *[I]t's really sad to understand and realize that you will never belong anywhere. Au debut, j'ai pensé que je faisais partie de la communauté gaie et lesbienne; je me suis rendue compte que pas du tout, et donc j'ai pris la baffe. Ensuite, je me suis dis, je vais aller me refugier dans la communauté Libanaise; j'ai pris une autre baffe. J'étais dans la communauté québécoise—une autre baffe.*[40] *[My partner] would say, "Let's go live in Spain"; mais encore une autre baffe. […] Je pense que, emotionellement parlant, c'est difficile. Il y a des moments que c'est très dur.*[41]

Like Nada, Diane describes Their experience in terms of its negative emotional impact:

> *It's been a lifelong struggle. I'd like to say that I'm "above" the need to belong so that I can just float and be okay; but it has always been an issue. It was an*

[40] "At first, I thought I could be a part of the gay and lesbian community; I realized that wasn't possible, so I took the hit. Then, I told myself, I will find my place with the Lebanese community; I took another hit. I was in the Québécois community—another hit."

[41] "…but still another hit. […] I think that, emotionally speaking, it's been difficult. At times it's been really hard."

> *issue when I was growing up as a teen. It really caused a lot of anguish. Even when I came here and connected more with the Native community, the fact that I am not a full Mohawk bothers me. It makes me question myself many times.*

These narratives reflect the melancholia experienced by the REC allosexual subject who is not able to claim citizenship in any sphere or through any means. In David L. Eng and Shinhee Han's (2000) reading of Freud (1917), melancholia "is a mourning without end," such that the "melancholic cannot 'get over' [the] loss [of the loved object]—cannot work out this loss in order to invest in new objects" (Eng and Han, 2000, p. 671; see also Cheng, 2000; Muñoz, 1998; Ahmed, 2004 and 2010)—the "lost object," for our purposes, being citizenship and its attendant affect, belonging. For REC allosexuals, the grief is very strong, for citizenship is a powerful emotional and psychological cathexis. Anne Anlin Cheng (2000), however, suggests that "racial identity as a melancholic formation" is unstable (p. 24), opening up possibilities for disruption. We can imagine that an intersectional identity such as that of the REC allosexual can only intensify and multiply such ruptures, unveiling the contingencies that undergird membership.

Insofar as it is held up as a model or ideal of inclusion, then, citizenship is simply a grand myth—a myth comprised of other myths. These other myths are interlaced with and contingent upon one another, and function through a variety of social, political, economic, and spatial sites: the notion of place cannot be realized without the presence of the law or the structuring of peoplehood; the law cannot function without places or people to preside over; and a belief in unity through sameness within a group cannot exist without a place to appropriate as home or laws to officialize the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Together, these myths assemble into a giant wall of normative

citizenship that is difficult for the REC allosexual subject to penetrate so that they may claim a sense of belonging for themselves. Difficult, but not impossible.

Mythic (Dis)Ruptures

Myths hold much power in the discursive imaginary of citizenship, as the above analysis suggests. However, as Michel Foucault (1990) has argued in his historical deconstruction of sexuality in Western culture, power must be viewed as "the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization" (p. 92). In considering power in this way, it becomes possible to destabilize hegemonic power relations by multiplying the different facets from which such relations can be perceived and exposing all the options, thereby making revolution a possibility (p. 93). Power relations become, in effect, a complex tactical situation, rather than a simple binary opposition, in a given society (p. 93). This subversion of power is aided by Foucault's reading of discourse, which, he suggests, not only "transmits and produces power […] but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (p. 101). Many people who find themselves in the margins of citizenship, including my narrators, have perceived and understood the instability of power, and have engaged in various forms of what Goldberg (1993) labels "a pragmatics of praxis" (p. 216) in their everyday lives to disrupt, challenge, contest, and transform the myths that attempt to deny them their ontological worth and prevent them from claiming a sense of belonging. At the heart of these "disruptures" are performances of citizenship that are grounded in disidentification.

According to José Esteban Muñoz (1998), "[D]isidentification is an ambivalent structure of feeling that works to retain the problematic object and tap into the energies that are produced by *contradictions and ambivalences*" (my emphasis) (p. 71). Thus, as a "problematic object," citizenship contains within it, for those who experience it as loss, a melancholia that can be harnessed, engaged with, and activated by marginalized subjects, who can use it "to map the ambivalences of identification and the conditions of (im)possibility that shape […] minority identities" (p. 74). As the REC allosexual activists I interviewed demonstrate through their life stories, the "contradictions and ambivalences" they encounter in their search for belonging as intersectional subjects enable them to circumscribe the rigid structures of membership to access discrete forms of citizenship and create new sites of belonging that are always already multiple and always already in a state of flux.

One such site is their own bodies, for it is through the power to define themselves that these subjects are first able to disidentify with normative constructions of identity. To this end, hybridity serves as an important tool, as May Joseph (1999a) affirms:

> Hybridity draws on local and transnational identifications, including primordial as well as postidentitarian conceptions of the nation. It generates historically new mediations. They are "new" because they are located outside the official practices of citizenship, situated in the interstices of numerous legal and cultural borders, while being increasingly self-conscious of an international political economy of subjectivities. (p. 2)

Thus, whether they were born in Montreal or elsewhere, my narrators carry a multiplicity of identity formations with them wherever they go, absorbing new ones and discarding or archiving old ones as they make their way through life.

Nada, for one, expresses her hybridity solely in terms of discrete identity markers

such as culture and religion. Culturally, she describes herself as a "melting pot of everything." While Lebanese is most prominent, she says there are aspects of the culture that she tosses aside, such as what she describes as its racism. She has also absorbed many aspects of Québécois culture into her own traditions. Even her religion is an amalgam of different beliefs:

> *I'm Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, and everything, because I take what I believe in from every religion because I think that religion has a good side and a bad side. So I take what is good for me and the rest, I just don't need it […]. I think that beliefs is also hope for me, so you cannot not believe in anything—you should believe in something. […] I think I believe in nature as a whole and I believe in destiny. I believe in energies. I really believe in stuff, but not in one particular religion.*

Through her disidentification with the norms of culture and religion, Nada is able to produce a view of herself that leaves her contented.

Unlike Nada, who immigrated to Canada as an adult, Kanwar was born and raised in Montreal. As a second-generation Punjabi-Canadian, he has found it difficult to feel a connection with his Punjabi roots, although he says he is trying to learn more about that side of himself. In contrast, he is well versed in his Sikh heritage, and disidentifies with it in ways that enable him to embrace it in a unique way:

> *I would say I'm [an] agnostic Sikh, if anything—like, questioning a lot. I have to say, though, Sikhism afforded me the opportunity to think about things in terms of metaphysics, and maybe even spirituality, a bit more critically. Why? Just the tenets of the religion; they say there's one God […] but the idea that comes straight from that that really influences me [is] that everybody, without exception, is equal. Without exception. So it doesn't mean that "Everybody's equal, but yeah, we'll hate on gays." No. It is without exception; everybody is equal. [...] So it's very interesting that the religion that I was born into protects me [as] a gay individual.*

Despite defining himself as "agnostic," Kanwar appropriates some of Sikhism's tenets because he agrees with them philosophically, and they offer him a sense of comfort by

bestowing him with a sense of security.

Alex, on the other hand, whole-heartedly rejects the construction of Rwanda according to the ethnic divisions imposed by the Belgian colonizers while maintaining his own sense of Rwandan-ness:

> *Things really completely changed. And in responding to that, it's like giving the credit to Belgium who came in and divided us. That's why I don't want to enter into those considerations. Unfortunately, now those things have really marked us—that's what brought the war in Rwanda, the genocide in Rwanda, so in not internalizing those considerations, I feel like more me, more close to what I am. When somebody insists, I'll say I'm from Rwanda. The state could mark my mom differently from my dad, but we didn't feel that we belonged to any group or [that] we had this mark.*

As mixed-race subjects, Val and Diane approach their cultural hybridity from a more racially and ethnically pluralized perspective. In Val's case, hybridity is enacted through different cultural practices, such as holiday celebrations with her parents. Christmas with her parents, for example, is a blend of Anglo-Canadian and Eastern European traditions, with her Chinese mother cooking traditional Slavic dishes for Christmas supper. Val adds, however, that often her cultural disidentity will shift, depending on the context:

> *[How I define myself culturally] depends on whom I'm around. It depends on what kind of strategy I'm using in that space. Sometimes it's Chinese, sometimes it's Chinese-[Southeast-Asian], sometimes it's just [Southeast Asian], sometimes it's [Eastern European], sometimes it's half-white […]. Sometimes it's Han Chinese, as well; more specificities might come into it. It just depends on whom I'm speaking with, whom I'm trying to identify with, whom I'm trying to unidentify with and create a barrier with. It just shifts, but it's always somewhere in the mix of those things.*

Diane also views Their disidentity as being highly contingent upon time and space, especially since up until Their generation came along, information about births in Their family was not recorded. Even so, They say,

> *my birth was recorded wrong. […] So taking on a different identity, taking on a different culture, taking on a different name—they were easy things that happened pretty regularly. So who knows who we really are?*

Ed, like Diane and Val, views Their cultural disidentity as contingent, pointing to the abstractness of identity as a key factor in this regard:

> *I feel very connected to being Korean; but what does that mean, "being Korean"? In the diasporic context it's very abstract. There isn't this sort of one experience. [...] I don't have, I guess, a way to label my cultural identity in this way that makes sense to me, but I do think that understanding my history, my parents' history, my grandparents' history is so important to my cultural identity. [...] It's not like I'll ever come to this destination where it's like, "This is my cultural identity. This is how I understand myself." It's always going to be changing depending on where I'm at.*

Contemplations on diaspora play a role in Jean-Pierre's approach to how he sees himself, as well, although he incorporates his sexuality into his hybrid cultural disidentity. This model exemplifies what a number of theorists have termed "queer diaspora," which, Jasbir Puar (2007) contends, "shift[s] away from origin for a moment[,] allow[ing] other forms of diasporic affiliative and cathartic entities […] to show their affiliative powers" (p. 171; see also Gopinath, 2005; Walcott, 2005; Eng, 2010; Lee, 1998). Queer diaspora throws into sharp relief the ways that disidentification functions as an intersectional form of subjectivity. Jean-Pierre deploys his queer diasporic status as a defence mechanism against social forces that serve to subjugate him:

> *I'm working both [my sexual and cultural identities] because I have both. I have to deal with both. Society reminds me of both a lot of times, and when negative things happen, it brings [up in me] certain things of what I lived in my past, and I try not to go to that place. It could disturb me; but society reminds me often by events that are happening around the world or happening even here in Montreal or in Canada that I'm still different. And that goes against my own values, which is [that] I wanna be inclusive. I see a world being inclusive; and at the same time I feel like I need to respect the area where I am. So I feel that I want to be inclusive.*

A queer diasporic positionality has enabled Alex to understand the nuances of sexuality in Africa, which is frequently essentialized as homophobic by the North/West:

> *[T]hat word, "homosexuality," does not exist in so many African languages. […] [E]ven those men that have sex with men or those men who love other men, they don't consider themselves like homosexuals. […] One [reason] is [that] the only image they have of homosexuals are those people that are extremely feminine and dress like girls—like the images the gay [pride] parade [in the West] […]. And because of that, they will say, "We are not homosexuals here in Africa." […] It's really different from one place to another one; the understandings are not the same, and it's not a Western way.*

Queer diaspora, then, presents REC allosexuals with a method for developing a relationship with community that does not threaten to erase them. Kanwar refers to the way this functions in his own life as "forgetting variables":

> *If you're amongst a group of people and you can forget about a few variables, those few variables you forgot about define that community. So if I'm chilling with my Sikh Punjabi friends, I forget myself that I am Sikh Punjabi. This isn't what defines me right now; I'm just chilling with buddies. […] So maybe the variable you forget is the community that you're in.*

While at first glance one might not consider a First Nations subject such as Diane to be diasporic, Their uneasy relationship with the reserve suggests a diasporic-like situation that influences how They see Their role as a Two-Spirit:

> *[T]he whole idea is I am in-between and that I'm in-between for a reason, and that essentially is what Two-Spirited is, is to find that in-between, to become comfortable with it and to follow what it calls you to do because it has a role. The in-between has an important role. It doesn't mean a void; it means a place that's designated for specific reasons.*

As a Two-Spirited person, Diane occupies a liminal space that allows Them to negotiate between multiple worlds, establishing Their own sense of diaspora that elides the spatial boundaries between nations and the discursive boundaries between genders.

Queer diaspora helps other narrators think through their disidentifications with

the nation-state, as well. Ed, for example, critically interrogates his own self-construction as a Canadian:

> *I think I'm actually kind of trying to get away from my Canadian-ness because I feel like my Canadian-ness is attached to this level of internalized racism that I've had growing up for a long time and I'm trying to find a way to detach from that. […] I'm realizing that trying to have this level of respectability when it comes to being Korean or Canadian actually was at the expense of other people—you know, this idea of Canada has been really destructive for specific groups of people—especially Native people, but others, as well.*

Re-evaluating what it means to be Canadian has spurred Ed to focus on seeking out connections which other people and, hence, create "moments of belonging" as a means by which to define who is he as a person, rather than as a Canadian:

> *If I have a really good conversation with my Korean friend after watching a Korean movie, for example, that is a moment of belonging that I want to remember and to really cherish and to feel like this is a time and place that I feel connected and I feel whole, but then knowing that that's not for everything. It's going to happen in moments because of who I am, because of my diasporic identity, because of the different forms of oppression that I might face, and knowing that I don't really have a sense of home. So I think that the moments are really important to me.*

As a queer diasporic subject, Ed is able to find ways to belong without needing the Canadian nation-state to valorize his self-worth for him or provide him with resources to facilitate belonging.

Disidentification also assists REC allosexuals in discovering physical spaces to belong. It helped V find Ste Emilie Skillshare, an arts co-op specifically for REC allosexuals like him. Ed, who is involved with the same co-op, feels that multiple sites of belonging are available in Montreal to REC allosexuals:

> *Although the queer community here is very disparate—it's not just one community, it's all these different communities—sometimes they intersect and sometimes they're separate, sometimes they're language-based and sometimes they're racially-based, sometimes they're age-based, sometimes they're activity-based . . . it's just this huge range, which is kind of good, actually. It's good to*

have that freedom to be able to go to different spaces.

Ultimately, disidentificatory practices enable REC allosexuals to configure and reconfigure their conceptualizations of home as a site of belonging and citizenship. Kanwar sees the multiplicity of both positive and negative experiences he has had in Montreal as contributing to his sense of home. For V, home is about where he feels safe. And while Nada is compelled to return to Lebanon every so often to reconnect with her roots, home for her is her life with her partner as well as their apartment:

> *Home, as on a daily basis and everything, is here. That's why I have a hard time leaving my apartment—not because of the apartment, but because the stories that are in the apartment, the stories and the energies and all that.*

As these stories suggest, home is not merely where the heart is; it is also where citizenship is lived.

Elspeth Probyn (1996) observes that "[i]n Quebec, identity most often rhymes with marginality" (p. 72). This is a truly insightful observation when one considers that in Quebec, *everyone* appears to be marginalized to some extent: the Québécois in relation to English Canada; Anglophones in Quebec in relation to the Québécois; immigrants in relation to non-immigrants; non-Whites in relation to Whites; Aboriginals in relation to colonizers; women in relation to men; allosexuals in relation to heterosexuals; the list could go on for quite some length. Marginality is built into the Quebec psyche. This is why Probyn describes Quebec identity as an "institutional project" doomed to failure (p. 67); no matter what efforts are made to erect and prop up *québécitude* as a coherent and unifying identity, the ground on which its foundation is laid will always be shaky at best. Viewed thusly, it becomes apparent that the conditions are ripe for subversive acts of belonging.

Disidentification, performed intersectionally through such mechanisms as hybridity and queer diaspora, provides my narrators and me with a means to tap into the ambivalence of citizenship and undermine the discursive power it wields through the interlaced normative myths of place, law, and peoplehood by enacting disruptures that create new sites of belonging—disidentificatory spaces that May Joseph (1999b) calls “citizenscapes.” Wandering through our citizenscapes, we rediscover knowledge lost to the violence of colonialism. We learn to love those parts of ourselves that we were told to hate and reject. We figure out how to survive the brutality of bullying, poverty, and war. We redefine what it means to be a national subject and protect ourselves from those who try to force a definition on us. We carve out a meaningful existence for ourselves in a city that brings us both joy and pain. We seek out communities where we are accepted for who we are; and when we cannot find them, we build them. And we come to understand that by simply living our citizenship, we are already home.

To take the myths of citizenship seriously is to make ourselves vulnerable to emotional and psychic damage. Through our life stories, however, my narrators and I demonstrate our flexibility (Ong, 1999) in claiming citizenship on different scales (Grundy and Smith, 2005) to divest ourselves of our melancholia. The binary of citizen and non-citizen is thrown into disarray by disidentifying REC allosexuals, who transform hegemonic discourses by inventing and sharing bonds with people, spaces, and ideas that may be temporary or permanent—in other words, by simply living their citizenship through their disidentification with the myths that aim to exclude them from belonging. In this sense, disidentification could be considered an option for “recasting the social in citizenship” (Isin, Brodie, Juteau, & Stasiulis, 2008).

The kind of citizenscapes that my narrators and I generate and live epitomize the “inclusive citizenship” that Ruth Lister (2007) outlines—a citizenship that is just, that recognizes the differences and intrinsic worth of fellow human beings, that values every person’s right to self-determination, and that fosters a sense of solidarity with those who face oppression and seek justice (pp. 50-51). With such defining features, it is not difficult to see the connection between inclusive citizenship and what Hall and Williamson (1999) call “active citizenship,” which is “a notion of citizenship based much more on participation and the fulfilment of responsibilities” (p. 13). Disidentifying with the normative myths of citizenship helps us to see and understand how our own struggles to belong and survive link with those of others who face and experience not only similar circumstances, but dissimilar ones, as well. As a result of this understanding, we are spurred into active engagement with their struggles, endeavouring to fulfil the promise of inclusive citizenship in all its aspects. The knowledges acquired through our disidentifications serve us well in this regard, for our disidentificatory impulses function as the backbone for our tactical strategies of activism.

Chapter Six

Activism Disidentifications

> *As we arm ourselves with ourselves and each other, we can stand toe to toe inside that rigorous loving and begin to speak the impossible—or what has always seemed impossible—to one another. The first step toward genuine change. Eventually, if we speak the truth to each other, it will become unavoidable to ourselves.*
>
> Audre Lorde (1984, p. 175)

On July 2, 2009, the High Court of Delhi in India ruled that Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code—the section instituted during the height of British colonial rule that criminalized "non-procreative sex, specifically sex between men" (International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission, 2009)—was unconstitutional and, hence, struck down. To commemorate this landmark verdict, GLAM, which I was coordinating at that time, decided to make this event the theme of our contingent for that summer's Pride parade in Montreal.

A few weeks before the parade, I received an email from a friend of mine requesting GLAM's participation in and public endorsement of the contingent for her group, Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QAIA), whose mandate is to speak out against the existing and increasing occupation of Palestinian territories by Israeli settlers and, by extension, the Israeli state. I wrote her back, offering my endorsement on behalf of GLAM, but declining to march with QAIA, knowing that we would need as many bodies as possible for our own group of marchers. Shortly thereafter, QAIA published their list of endorsements, and that is when the trouble began.

First, I received a call from a friend who was the director of a well-known local anti-racist organization. He expressed his concerns about GLAM's endorsement, stating that it could jeopardize the funding that Ethnoculture, the other group I was coordinating, might receive from the local Jewish community to bring in Louis-Georges Tin, a Black allosexual activist from France, to speak at our upcoming event. While I found this warning unsettling, I stood my ground and did not withdraw my endorsement of the QAIA.

By the time the day of the Parade arrived in mid-August, the phone call was lost in the recesses of my mind. The marchers for GLAM were assembled with all of our banners, which narrated the history of the anti-sodomy law and the recent judgement that erased it from the books. As we walked along the route on what was a clear and sunny day, we could see the people who were lining the streets reading our banners and hear them applaud as they grasped the message. It was most certainly a jubilant and celebratory environment, and we felt the full force of the crowd's warmth in this extended moment.

As we neared the end of the parade route, I registered a number of small Israeli flags being waved around in the air just ahead of me to my right. I thought nothing of it until I heard a couple of voices shout:

"Booooo! Boooooo!"

"You should be fighting with us! Not against us!"

I was taken aback. Why on earth would anybody be booing us? Especially on this occasion? Was it our message? A few seconds later, I put two and two together and realized that it was the people with the Israeli flags who were booing us—not for the narrative we were relaying, but for the endorsement of QAIA that I had given. I was flabbergasted; why would they think I was against them? Could they not see that GLAM's endorsement was intended to support the QAIA's very clear and cogent critiques of the Israeli state, which were not framed as a critique of the Israeli people?

Later, after I returned to my apartment, I noticed on my Facebook account that the head of the local allosexual Jewish group had unfriended me. I also read some discussions on my news feed between people I knew and did not know about the QAIA's contingent, with many—mostly White gay men—decrying the group's involvement in the parade and lambasting them for diverting the public's attention away from gay and lesbian rights, which should have been the "real focus" of the event. I could feel the anger slowly bubbling up inside me.

When September arrived, my focus shifted to Ethnoculture and the event we were organizing. We managed to cobble together enough funding to bring Louis-Georges Tin ourselves without the financial support that my afore-mentioned friend had suggested some Jewish organizations were interested in offering. However, Monsieur Tin and I were invited to a luncheon at a fancy restaurant that was coordinated by my friend to welcome the former to Montreal as well as to provide a networking opportunity for members of the Jewish and allosexual communities. Upon my arrival at the restaurant, I was introduced to the head of one of the Jewish organizations. After exchanging pleasantries, the woman, smiling, told me, "I don't agree with your decision, but you're young, so you'll learn from this." Then my friend whisked the woman away to introduce her to another allosexual activist.

I stood there in utter disbelief. Had I really just been condescended to so brazenly? To be so dismissive of me without truly knowing me or my politics? What nerve! Once again, anger ignited inside me, and I sat there seething through the rest of the meal, contemplating how fortunate I was that I had not been put in the position of accepting money from someone who conceived of me and my politics with such a dim and narrow perspective.

* * *

Activism Contests

To call oneself an activist is to invite a wide array of reactions and responses to this interpellation. Some will be genuinely curious about the issues around which the activism is formed and will seek explanations of and elaborations on them for their own

edification. Some will laugh derisively and engage in puerile mockery of the activist and his or her values and beliefs. Some will display their often-violent anger and contempt for the movement(s) in which the activist participates. Some will nod their heads in agreement and inquire how they themselves can become involved. And some will simply be indifferent.

Activism, therefore, cannot be defined as a monolithic entity. It is nebulous and fluid, shifting in space and time, and shaped by different contexts and individuals and their positionalities in those contexts. One thing that all activisms have in common, however, is that they are rooted in acts, in the doings of something. Without acts, there would be no activism. Thus, by its very nature, activism is performative; and in all its performativity, activism produces social actors—activ*ists*—who not only perform acts, but create and recreate them in a variety of ways that are at once emotional, disruptive, imaginative, enduring, and transformative (see Isin & Nielsen, 2008). While activism is frequently perceived to be the domain of the Left, Engin F. Isin (2008b) contends that "acts of citizenship" in and of themselves are value-free; it is only their effects, often expressed through dialectics such as inclusion or exclusion, empowerment or disempowerment, tolerance or intolerance, that can be considered to have values attributed to them (p. 38). Isin therefore suggests that the analysis of such acts should focus on three primary areas: 1) the "grounds and consequences" of these performances (p. 38); 2) their orientation towards justice, however that may be defined; and 3) their relationship—or lack thereof—to law (p. 39). Scrutinized thusly, activist performances can then be seen for what they are trying to do, how they are doing it, and whether or not they are successful at it.

Although activists can undoubtedly function on their own as individuals, for the sake of efficacy they will usually join forces with others of like mind and interest and operate collectively to achieve common ends. This collective effort is often framed in the context of "community"—another "politically neutral" concept (DeFilippis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010, p. 4) that, as we have already seen, is "imagined" in many different ways, though in much of the literature on community organizing, "community" is situated primarily as a geographic ideation (see, for example, DeFilippis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010; Shragge, 2003; Sampson, 2008; Traynor, 2008; Greenberg, 2008). In terms of collective action, community has two dimensions: on one hand, it is the *subject* of such action, in that the collectivity is comprised of activists sharing a "collective consciousness" as well as "a sense of mutuality and solidarity" (Hunt & Benford, 2004/2007, p. 434) who perform the acts of activism; and on the other hand, community is the *object* of collective action, in that it is the teleological site of "building" and "development" towards which the collectivity of activists directs its energies (see, among others, Traynor, 2008; Speer & Hughey, 2008; DeRienzo, 2008; Shaw & Martin, 2000/2008; Shragge, 2003). While Eric Shragge (2003) states that "[o]rganizers are outsiders" (p. 21), this is not always the case; oftentimes, the subjective and objective dimensions of community are imbricated with each other, with activists positioned as both being of and working for the community. Regardless what their positionality is, community activists, whether operating individually or collectively, have one general goal in mind: social change, which is "defined by material gains and changing relations of power" (p. 10).

What partly distinguishes the kind of work community activists do collectively

from other forms of collective action, such as rioting, is its non-institutional character (Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004/2007, p. 7). In addition, community activism usually entails "some degree of organization" and "temporal continuity" as well as the previously mentioned goal of social change (p. 6) and a challenge to institutional or cultural authority (pp. 8-9, 11). Defined by these elements, community activism is inseparable from the sociological construct of social movements, which frequently overlaps with other concepts related to collective action, such as interest groups and different forms of collective behaviour (pp. 7-8).

According to Rhys H. Williams (2004/2007), social movements produce and function within their own cultures that are framed through "the deployment of symbols, claims, and even identities" (p. 93), imbuing such movements with particular meanings. The cultural environment within which social movements operate is interactive (between activists, publics, and claims) (p. 97), yet bounded by space, time, and context (pp. 101-104), and the frames produced must resonate in specific ways with audiences in order to inform and mobilize them (pp. 105-106). To effectuate this resonance, activists draw from a repertoire of knowledge and skills they possess, which is shaped and determined by "cultural and historical circumstances" (p. 96). In accessing this repertoire, activists gain agency in the performance of their activism (p. 96).

Social movements, then, can be empowering for those who are active in them (Speer & Hughey, 2008). Despite their agentic quality, however, social movements typically cannot rely solely on activists' accessing their repertoires to achieve marked levels of success; other elements need to be factored into the equation, as well. Certain material resources, particularly funding, are an absolute necessity for many

organizations to accomplish their goals, though converting these resources into something that is useful for collective action may require a coordinated and "strategic effort" by activists (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004/2007, p. 116). Good leaders can also be a major determinant of an organization's success; such leaders, write Aldon D. Morris and Suzanne Staggenborg (2004/2007), "inspire commitment, mobilize resources, create and recognize opportunities, devise strategies, frame demands, and influence outcomes" (p. 171). Dieter Rucht (2004/2007), meanwhile, underscores the importance of allies in helping organizations persevere and pursue their goals. Together, all of these elements can be categorized as social capital, which James B. Hyman (2008), extrapolating from Alejandro Portes (1998), Pierre Bourdieu (1985), James Coleman (1988), and Robert Putnam (1995), defines as "*an asset representing actionable resources that are contained in, and accessible through, a system of relationships*" (author's emphasis) (p. 226).

Viewing social movements as a matter of social capital, however, also exposes some of the inequalities that pervade the activist sphere, as it becomes immediately apparent who has such capital and who does not. In particular, as Bob Edwards and John D. McCarthy (2004/2007) point out, it is "middle class groups" that have privileged access to many resources, and it is thus their concerns that are most reflected in "advanced industrial democracies" (p. 117). Indeed, any social movement undoubtedly has the capacity to enact social change, it may also obfuscate the inequalities that play out within the movement, as McAllister (2011) has argued (p. 16). From this perspective, the imagining of community as a mythic site of purity wherein cohesion is based on a sense of "common identity" and "shared values" is troubled, in that the belief

in this vision belies the fact that it is not representative of people's "actual social experiences together" (Sennett, 2008, p. 175). This contradiction then results in competition and conflict for organizations both internally and externally (Rucht, 2007). Furthermore, certain ideologies may take hold and influence decision-making and collective unity and solidarity (Sayer, 1986/2008).

Neoliberal policies have had an especially profound impact on social movements in the North/West, with organizations specifically on the left given short shrift by foundations, governments, and bureaucrats who control the purse strings and, consequently, the very survival of these organizations. Dylan Rodriguez (2007) refers to this inegalitarian interaction as the "non-profit industrial complex," which is "the set of symbiotic relationships that link together political and financial technologies of state and owning-class proctorship and surveillance over public political intercourse, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements" (pp. 21-22). This complex has led to the professionalization of community organizing (DeFilippis, 2008; Smith, 2007; de Almeida, 2007) as well as the espousal of a philosophy of self-help (Shaw & Martin, 2000/2008; Berner & Phillips, 2005/2008) that enables the state to shirk its duties to citizens by putting more responsibility for their own fate in their own hands and letting the market ultimately decide who wins and who loses (DeFilippis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010; Smith, 2007; Shaw & Martin, 2000/2008; Gilmore, 2007). Neoliberalism, in effect, has steered activism away from its non-institutional roots and transformed it into an institution itself. As Andrea Smith (2007) reminds us, though, "While fundraising is part of organizing, fundraising is not a precondition for organizing" (p. 11). Certainly, in recent history there have been numerous movements

and organizations within those movements that have managed to enact and incite social change without being constrained by commitments and obligations to funders. Sean Mills' (2010) analysis of social movements in Montreal during the 1960s is instructive in this regard.

In his book, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal*, Mills examines how the writings of various renowned anti-colonial thinkers of the mid-20th century, particularly Albert Memmi, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Jacques Berque, helped ignite a number of major social movements in Montreal during that period. Beginning with Québécois activists' adoption of theories of decolonization and drawing a line that traverses Black, feminist, linguistic, and labour activisms in the city, Mills reveals the very intricate and complex ways that social movements in Montreal germinated and evolved in response to events that were happening elsewhere in the world. As Mills writes, "The idea of decolonization had appeal in Sixties Montreal partly because of the lived experience of unequal power relations in the city" (p. 7). Radical intellectuals and activists in Montreal, such as Raoul Roy, Gaston Miron, and André Laurendeau, likened the struggle of the Québécois against socioeconomic, political, and cultural domination by English Canada and the United States to that of Blacks in Africa and the United States, giving rise to the former's identification with Blackness, which was glorified in Pierre Vallières' (1968) work described in Chapter 4. The foolishness and offensiveness of this comparison aside, what is particularly intriguing about this period, as detailed by Mills (2010), is the grassroots nature of much of the activism that took place. While cafés and universities served as the domain of intellectuals and artists, the poor neighbourhoods in Montreal

became “sites of resistance” where residents organized and launched new initiatives, including “consumer co-ops and collective kitchens” in Pointe Saint-Charles, “a citizens’ bookstore” in Saint-Henri, and citizens’ committees in many of the city’s quarters (pp. 46-47).

Despite their affinity with Black struggle elsewhere, Montreal-based Québécois radicals, who were predominantly White and male, conveniently overlooked in their own midst the inequalities experienced by Blacks, women, and other minoritized groups, who ultimately responded with the creation of their own movements. Blacks in Montreal, for example, drawing on the Black Power politics of Malcolm X and the Black Panthers, established numerous community-based associations and media outlets and regularly organized rallies to protest against Black oppression (Mills, 2010, pp. 109-110). Distancing themselves from the vision of Québécois radicals, who “saw Montreal as a colonized city,” Black activists understood Montreal to be “an imperial metropole which undoubtedly formed part of the West, and which therefore held its share of responsibility for the misery inflicted upon the poor nations of the world” (p. 111). Feminists, meanwhile, installed their own women-centred institutions, including the Fédération des femmes du Québec (p. 122), focusing much of their attention on “the political nature of personal problems” and protesting publicly and producing handbooks to address such problems (pp. 124-125).

It was towards the end of this politically-charged era that the beginnings of a public gay and lesbian social movement also surfaced. Inspired by the Stonewall riots in New York City in 1969, during which patrons of the Stonewall Tavern fought back against the police during a routine raid, *Mainmise*, a local counter-cultural journal, put

out “a call for the formation of a Front de libération homosexuelle québécois” (FLHQ) as a means of allying gays and lesbians with the goals of the broader radical separatist movement led by the Front de libération du Québec, despite the latter’s homophobic attitude (Mills, 2010, p. 214). Lesbians in the early 1970s also began organizing publicly during the period by “establishing coffee-houses and political groups” (p. 214). While many of the organizations and groups founded during this period succumbed to police raids of their meetings and arrests of their members, the seeds were planted for a more vigorous allosexual activism to come in the following decades (p. 214).

Although allosexuals became more radicalized and visible in the early 1970s, this does not mean that organizing around sexuality had not taken place prior to that period. Indeed, as Ross Higgins (1997) points out, gay men had already assembled “a self-aware collectivity” that had effected “non-violent social change […] from the ground up” (p. 387). Collecting and studying the life stories of gay men who lived much of their social life in Montreal before 1970, Higgins concludes that it was through regular conversation around and actions related to gay existence that gay men were able to think of themselves as a collectivity that experienced oppression in society and, thus, become concerned with gay rights (p. 387). Social institutions such as bars and parties provided the setting in which the development of a collective identity could occur, and as this identity evolved and strengthened, the institutions that were so crucial to its survival were themselves reified. The quieter, more discrete epistemologically-oriented activism of these men in the 1950s and 1960s gave birth to many of the leaders, including those of the FLHQ, who would pull Montreal’s gay community into visibility and vocality in the 1970s.

The above examples demonstrate that, historically, social movements in Montreal were able to proliferate and thrive without being dependent on resources from state institutions or foundations managed and controlled by the wealthy, laying the foundation for many contemporary social movements. At the very least, one can see that doing grassroots activism is not impossible, even in the current neoliberal environment. However, today's organizers should also be cautioned not to romanticize Montreal's activist past, as it was not without its problems, either. Mills (2010) observes, for example, that the Black Power movement in Montreal was structured around notions of Black masculinity, with Black women relegated to more passive and domestic roles (pp. 117-118). In the feminist movement, meanwhile, rifts developed along linguistic lines, with the Front de libération des femmes excluding Anglophone women from participating in the group (p. 134).

Montreal's social movements are not alone, of course, in grappling with identity politics among their ranks. Many activist organizations in the last half-century have been rife with internal tensions resulting from essentialized conceptualizations of being. Racialized lesbian feminist scholars such as Audre Lorde (1984), Gloria Anzaldúa (2002), the Combahee River Collective (1981), and Notisha Massaquoi (2007), for instance, have been very critical of White heterosexual middle class feminists and their wilful lack of regard for issues of racism, heterosexism, and classism within the feminist movement. Similarly, allosexual historians and theorists such as Gary Kinsman (1996), Tom Warner (2002), Allan Bérubé (2001/2003), and Priyank Jindal (2004/2008) have brought attention to the absence of discussion around race, ethnicity, and Whiteness in gay and lesbian and queer politics. And racialized allosexual writers and activists such as

Michael Hames-García (2009), Samati Gibbons Niyomchai (2009), and Rinaldo Walcott (2005) have pointed out that the many so-called leaders in Chicano/a, Asian American, and Black Studies, respectively, have traditionally dismissed the theoretical output of racialized allosexual thinkers as irrelevant to the development of those disciplines. Even my story that introduced this chapter highlights the complexity of the tensions that can emerge between different ethnicized allosexual organizations when global politics enter the picture. Social movements are not pure or unified sites; they are as inherently fluid and contradictory as identity itself.

Despite such divisions, though, many activist-citizens, both individually and collectively, have managed to engage in what Peter Nyers (2008) calls a "*politics* of aesthetics" (author's emphasis) (p. 164) by devising and developing new and creative ways to share their stories and perspectives, even when more dominant and powerful voices have attempted to silence them. In other words, they have discovered how to "talk back" to their oppressors, as bell hooks (1989) so famously put it. The forms of activism that emerge in these instances are unquestionably disidentificatory, as they twist and re-shape conventional and essentialized symbols, representations, and discursive readings to create new identities—identities-in-difference—that contest and disrupt the hegemonic order.

We can see this talking back taking place, for example, in the explosion of narratives generated by disenfranchised peoples in the postcolonial (Dyer, 1997) and decolonial (Bacchetta & Maese-Cohen, 2010) periods. Many of these voices have been articulated through art, writing, and performance. As Deborah Barndt (2006) suggests, "[A]rtmaking that ignites people's creativity, recovers repressed histories, builds

community and strengthens social movements is in itself a holistic form of action" (p. 18). Bill Ashcroft (2001) adds that "[c]reative artists often seem to express most forcefully the imaginative vision of a society" (p. 5). Their creativity often manifests itself in opposition to dominant narratives, such as those of the nation, as counter-narratives, which, Homi Bhabha (1990) maintains, "continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries—both actual and conceptual—[and] disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities" (p. 300).

Theatre is one artistic medium through which marginalized peoples have engaged in such a process of counter-narrativizing. For instance, Guillaume Bernardi (2007) has highlighted the individual cross-gender performance pieces of Asian Canadian dancers Peter Chin and Hari Krishnan as representative not only of a means for the artists to reassert "their own Asian identity" (p. 12) through traditional dance forms, but also to promote "a new way of looking at gender" (p. 14), showing that "[t]raditions are […] not the exclusive territory of the traditionalists" (p. 13). Jill Carter (2006), meanwhile, describes the work of Native theatre artists such as the Turtle Gals Performance Ensemble as contributing to the "greater project of decolonization" (14). On a larger scale, community-based—or "community-engaged," in Edward Little's words (2007, p. 7)—theatre offers a broader-based platform on which subjugated groups can create performances that actively resist the myths that exclude them. It does so, Tobin Nellhaus and Susan C. Haedicke (2001) argue, by

> strengthening alliances and forging new ones, along with the skills and symbols to sustain them. Consequently, it must constantly consider all types of alliances—and so should not hold out false hopes for a singular, fixed concept of community. For better or worse its history and goals enforce its multiplicity. (p.

12)

Little (2007) offers the *Rights Here!* project, which was established in the working class immigrant neighbourhood of Park Extension in Montreal "to inspire young people to take responsibility, leadership, and action within their communities" (p. 7), as a successful example of a community-engaged theatre project. Community-based theatre is ultimately about fostering dialogue (or as James Tully [1995] would call it, "multilogue") and presents outsiders with the opportunity to come together and tell their stories, share their experiences of marginalization, and debunk the myths that oppress them without sacrificing their identities to some essentialized—and essentializing—notion of community.

Beyond artistic expression, there exist other disidentificatory forms of direct action that minoritized subjects may deploy to subvert the prevailing power structures that rule over their lives. One form in particular that has done much to advance the interests of the disenfranchised is the coalition. Vera Miao (1998) regards the coalition "as a potentially radical space" wherein "simplistic binaries of theory and practice are themselves a site of contestation" (p. 66). In her conceptualization of coalitions, it is the focus on "common political goals rather than […] identity" (p. 66) that is key:

> This shift from identity politics to the identification of political goals leaves space for differing expressions precisely because it no longer assumes the need for allegiances built on static and uniform identities. […] Already defined by its political goals, the coalition does not need the assumption of some intrinsic and essential commonality for effective political work. (pp. 66-67)

With all participants agreeing on particular political goals to bind them together, then, there is less likelihood of fissures developing within the coalition based on factors related to identity.

One effective example of coalition building has been among Asians through panethnic cooperation. Yen Le Espiritu (1992) describes "pan-movements" as those that "involve shifts in levels of group identification from smaller boundaries to larger-level affiliations" (p. 2). Panethnicity captures such a shift, whereby the boundaries of ethnicity become elastic, allowing for the creation of "a politico-cultural collectivity made up of peoples of several, hitherto distinct, tribal or national origins" (p. 2.). This concept challenges traditional notions of ethnicity, which have been predominantly based on either primordialist or instrumentalist theories of ethnic identity—that is, ethnicity based on, respectively, either its "sentimental" value in relation to culture and tradition or its utility in instances of economic, political, or social gain (p. 4). "The phenomenon of panethnicity," writes Espiritu, "call[s] attention […] to the coercively imposed nature of ethnicity, its multiple layers, and the continual creation and re-creation of culture" (p. 5).

Adopting panethnicity as a way of looking at ethnicity, then, can help disrupt the orientalist imaginings of Asian-ness that have been foisted upon Asian peoples—both diasporic and continental—by non-Asians. More importantly, however, panethnicity, as a basis for coalition-building, has enabled different Asian groups to join in solidarity for specific purposes without having to worry about losing their own identity to some notion of Asian-ness grounded in a form of racial lumping. For example, according to Dina G. Okamoto (2003), most pan-Asian coalitional activities in the U.S. have historically focused on "a grievance or claim tied to a previous event that usually involved some form of prejudice or discrimination against Asian Americans" (p. 834). Coalitions have also been particularly useful for intersectional activism; in previously published work, I

(Wong, 2012) have described how GLAM has brought together members from different Asian ethnicities to participate in a variety of projects ranging from a poster campaign to promote sexual diversity issues in Asian communities (see Figure 1) to involvement in allosexual Pride events such as community fairs and parades as a means of increasing visibility of Asians in the allosexual community (see story at beginning of chapter) as well as to counter the more homogenizing image of Asian-ness put forth by groups such as the Long Yang Club, an international organization with chapters all over the world, including Montreal, that was established so that predominantly White gay men could meet young Asian men.

Coalitions, then, can be an effective means of political action due to their emphasis on shared goals rather than identity. At the same time, when identity is an instigating factor behind such action, as it has been for some panethnic social movements, then coalitions can also be a powerful way of subverting and disidentifying with the myths that often engulf particular identities. Dominant discourses are appropriated by a coalition of the non-dominant, played with and contorted, then redeployed against the dominant in a show of collective and collaborative force. In this sense, coalitions function as a space of transformation, much like Anzaldúa's (2002) vision of *nepantla*, "where different perspectives come into conflict and where you question the basic ideas, tenets, and identities inherited from your family" (p. 548), producing new forms of knowledge.

This conflictual facet of coalition work serves to de-romanticize it, removing any semblance it may have to "home," for as Bernice Johnson Reagon (1983/2000) reminds us, "Coalition work has to be done in the streets. And it is some of the most dangerous

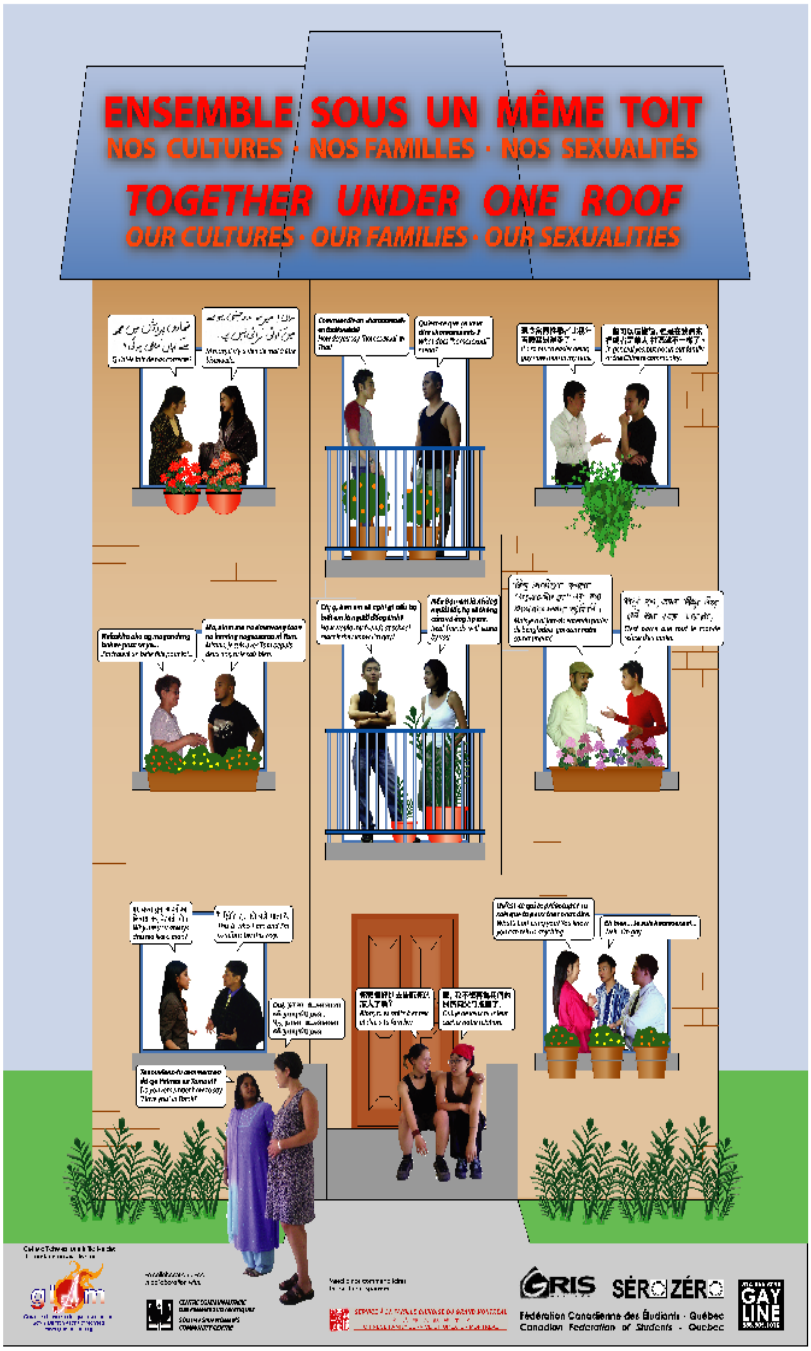

Figure 1: GLAM poster project "Together Under One Roof"

work you can do" (p. 346). Coalition work is *work*—difficult and challenging work—and is not intended as a cathexis for comfort and safety. That does not mean, however, that other emotions are not relevant to coalition building. In fact, emotions can be a vital component of activism in general, for they move us, according to Sara Ahmed (2004), "into a different relation to the norms that we wish to contest, or the wounds we wish to heal" (p. 201). As such, certain emotions, even those deemed "negative" or "destructive," have the potential to be "enabling or creative" (p. 201.).

One such emotion, which Lorde (1984) has famously written about, is anger. "Anger," she says, "is loaded with information and energy" (p. 127); and if, for example, a racialized woman who experiences racism can focus her anger and use it strategically, then that anger "can transform difference through insight into power" (p. 131). In other words, anger is the means by which the oppressed can articulate and communicate the content of the injustice they experience, which then leaves open the possibility for social change. María Lugones (2003) frames this as "second-order anger," which seeks to create the future, as opposed to "first-order anger," which is reactionary and responsive to immediate acts of injustice and, thus, only looks to the past (p. 113). In Lugones' view, rage would be classified as a second-order anger, particularly for those who can relate to Anzaldúa's (1999) *mestiza* consciousness, who live their lives in liminality, in hybridity, in the in-between, as "rage […] is a way of making space for [themselves]" in which they are able to discern all the "worlds" they inhabit and, thus, different ways of speaking and being (Lugones, 2003, p. 114).

Situated at another part of the emotional spectrum is love, or the "erotic," as it is most often labeled in works by REC allosexual theorists such as Lorde (1984), Chela

Sandoval (2002), and Qwo-Li Driskill (2004). For Lorde (1984), erotic love bridges the spiritual and the political through the sharing and experiencing of joy (pp. 56-57), and the knowledge born of this love is empowering to those who understand what it means to be powerless and wish not to return to such a state (p. 58). Inspired by Lorde, Driskill (2004) has theorized the erotic in First Nations Two-Spirit/Queer context as "sovereign," serving as a means by which "[to] decolonize [Aboriginal] sexualities" by exposing and resisting the political and religious colonialisms that have attempted to regulate and discipline them (p. 54). This and other practices of re-reading and re-appropriating the erotic is what Sandoval (2002) refers to as "a methodology *for* the oppressed and *of* emancipation" (author's emphasis) (p. 27).

Both affect and emotion, then, are used by activists to disidentify with hegemonic understandings and definitions of their ways of being; affect carries them into disidentificatory space through the impulse to belong, and emotion keeps them there for sustained amounts of time, allowing them to discover different ways to operationalize the space for particular ends. Thus, emotion becomes an important tool for both individual and collective action. I will now turn to the life stories of my REC allosexual narrators to interrogate the variegated forms their activisms have taken as well as the roles that emotion and other elements have played in their work.

Contesting Activisms

Definitions

Several of my narrators define activists and activism in very broad and open terms. Diane, for example, frames activism as what occurs in everyday social relations, such

that change can be effected in people's lives by simply encountering one another. As They state, "I'm a firm believer that you don't live your life in isolation." Jean-Pierre's view is that changing someone else's life can be done both actively and passively by individuals, implying that one need not necessarily be outgoing or outspoken to be an activist. Ed concurs, saying, "I think that activism comes in all shapes and forms, so even everyday resistance to oppression, in my eyes, is activism." Indeed, to V, the word "activist" is simply a label that certain high-profile people give themselves or to others like them while overlooking those who perform small, yet no-less-significant acts of social change in daily life with little fanfare. Exemplifying these unheralded moments is Val's earlier story of the email exchange between her homophobic uncle and her mother, which Val contends highlights the activism that happens at the micro-social level:

> *When I had that breakthrough with my mom in the fall, I started to feel like people who go home and have really hard conversations with their family rather than letting the bigotry and discrimination slide—those are activists. Those are unappreciated or underappreciated activists who never really get the awards and the accolades and all those things, but they are doing really important activist work.*

Kanwar and Alex, meanwhile, situate activism as a site where extraordinary people do extraordinary things. The former believes that true activists are people such as famed Canadian community organizer Jaggi Singh, who commits every moment of his life to a variety of social and economic justice causes. According to Kanwar, the "activist" as a figure in society "is an ideal […] an absolute" that he believes he cannot live up to himself because he enjoys taking time for leisure activities. Similarly, Alex thinks "an activist is someone who wants a change, who goes in a political way, who speaks out, who sometimes puts his life in danger." Because his own work has been more about "mobilizing" and coordinating people on a social level rather than "fighting"

for specific causes in the political arena, Alex, like Kanwar, does not consider himself to be an activist.

Both Kanwar and Alex appear to be ambivalent about designating their work as activism. In their minds, having a visibly public and outspoken profile is a defining feature of an activist. Kanwar, interestingly, refers to the constancy of doing activism as another important aspect of being an activist, suggesting that he believes that activists do not rest or engage in leisure activities. These responses also raise a question: If they do not consider what they do to be activism, then what can we call their activities? Kanwar is undoubtedly an artist, but the content of his music is unapologetically political. Does that mean art and activism cannot mix? As we saw earlier through the examples of dance and community theatre, art and activism can and do work in tandem with each other. Alex, meanwhile, uses words such as "mobilizing" to describe what he does. If one were to go by the definitions of activism put forth by the other narrators, then both Alex and Kanwar would be considered activists, while conversely, some of the other narrators might not match Alex's and Kanwar's criteria for activism. This lack of agreement disrupts and destabilizes "activist" and "activism" as epistemological and performative sites and is emblematic of the narrators' disidentification with the terms.

Beginnings

In reflecting on the history of their activisms, several narrators reach as far back as their childhoods to pinpoint the start of their social and political work. Kanwar became actively involved in protests and demonstrations at the youngest age in comparison to the other narrators due to his father's false imprisonment for the Air India bombing as

well as the deadly raid on the Sikh Golden Temple by government forces in India in 1984:[42]

> *As children, after my dad was released from jail, every year until I was 12 or 13, we would drive over to Ottawa and a bunch of us—Sikhs and non-Sikhs—would get together and march in front of Parliament and demand that the Canadian government ask the Indian government about what happened in '84 [and] '86.*

Other narrators began their activist work as adolescents. Nada, for one, was heavily involved with a group in Lebanon called Libanus, which raises money to send teens who might not otherwise be able to afford it to go to school, as high schools in Lebanon are only semi-public. Diane, meanwhile, wrote a letter at the age of twelve to the Liberal Party candidate in Their riding in Cornwall, Ontario, to express Their views on some of his proposals during his campaign and brazenly went to his office to hand the letter to him personally. The positive response They received inspired Them to become active in Their school's news media. In her role as student trustee for her county's local school board, Val fought for student rights on behalf of her high school.

Ed, referring back to Their earlier statement about activism as being the "everyday resistance against oppression," asserts that Their first acts of oppression were simply about being Themself in a normative society:

> *I think my first political act probably came at a very young age when I resisted my family or people around me in terms of how people thought I should act—you know, be more masculine, or as an Asian person be stereotypically Asian. […] I just was naturally going against the norm, and in that way, I think, even as a child I was probably political or acting in a political way.*

To Ed, countering norms through the body is empowering; it becomes, in effect, a lived

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[42] On June 5, 1984, the Indian army attacked the Golden Temple, a prominent Sikh Gurdwara in the Punjabi city of Amritsar, to flush out Sikh militants. Known as Operation Blue Star, the raid left 493 Sikhs inside the Temple and 83 military officers dead (see Kundu, 1994).

form of activism that underscores the disidentificatory performance of an identity wherein race and gender intersect. This "lived" or "embodied" activism resonates in V's story, as well:

> *To gender fuck—that was my first political act; to be like, "Fuck this shit! I'm gonna dress the way I want!" [...] I had a whole MAC (cosmetics) kit. I had the most expensive MAC kit ever, and I thought that was going to make me happy, to have so many different cosmetics, doing my hair somewhere often . . . and when I decided that that was enough, that that's not how I identified, for me it was like a revolutionary act—just to cut my hair; I felt so free by cutting my [hair].*

As a performative gesture, the act of cutting his hair and dispensing with the cosmetics kit and female-identified clothing was liberating to V, echoing Ed's narrative of activism as lived through the body.

In describing their initial encounters with activism, the narrators present experiences that range from the more conventional to the more anti-normative. The variation in their responses affirm that "activism" as a discursive site is not easy to pin down. Indeed, these narratives of activist beginnings are indicative of the journey all of them take as their activisms evolve over the years.

REC Allosexual Activism

Most of my narrators have taken on leadership roles in Montreal-area community organizing at different times in their lives, with several even being responsible for and active in multiple groups, REC allosexual or otherwise. Nada, for example, is a past coordinator for Helem Montreal and co-president of Coalition MultiMundo, and founded and coordinated both Ethnoculture and Zaafaran. Ed has been a coordinator for both Agir and Ethnoculture, and was also involved in the Coalition. Alex founded Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique/Rainbow Africa and has been co-president of the Coalition. Diane co-

founded Bispirituel,[43] sits on the board for Canadian Parents for French, and has been a long-time member of what used to be called Lesbian Mothers Association, but is now known, along with a gay fathers group, as Coalition Homoparentale. V has been a coordinator with Ste Emilie Skillshare and Pervers/cité.[44] Val has been a member of a collective that manages her undergraduate university's sexual assault centre, and she has worked for a maternal health NGO in Montreal.[45] And Jean-Pierre founded GLAM. Kanwar is the only narrator whose activist work has been done independently, although he has some links with the Sikh Activist Network based in Toronto.

Diane probably has the most extensive history of allosexual activism, as They had participated in the protests in 1976 against the police raids of gay and lesbian bars and taverns as part of a suspected "clean-up" operation in advance of the Montreal Olympics (Warner, 2002, p. 107):

> *It was a sit-in at the police station, and I remember that being a very momentous occasion for a lot of us. […] It wasn't something that we had sat and planned and organized or anything like that. It was like, "This is happening, this isn't okay, okay, let's go!" There was no afterthought as to what would happen—the flack, you know, that you would get afterwards. "What if somebody sees you? What if . . ."—none of that. We just did it on impulse, as teens have a tendency to do, and dealt with the consequences afterwards.*

Like many young adults, Diane used university as a launching pad to investigate hitherto unexplored aspects of Their being—in this instance, Their sexuality—which translated into social action on the streets. Val, Ed, and I also commenced our allosexual activism at university through knowledge gained in the classroom and/or through

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[43] The French translation for "Two-Spirited".

[44] Pervers/cité is a week-long event that was created as the alternative, anti-capitalist answer to Divers/cité, which until, until 2007, held the official allosexual pride celebrations in Montreal.

[45] An advocacy organization for reproductive rights in Quebec.

student groups that either had an allosexual focus or attracted much allosexual participation.

Others found their way into allosexual activism through other paths. Nada, for instance, stumbled into allosexual activism somewhat by accident. After breaking off her engagement with her fiancé because of her lesbianism, Nada went through a period of insecurity about her sexuality. She was coaxed into going into Montreal's *Village Gai* a number of times by some of her gay male friends and slowly came to an understanding about her sexual identity. One night, she bumped into an old friend of hers from Lebanon who confessed to her that he was gay. He had been attempting to establish the Montreal chapter of Helem, and invited her to attend the next meeting, which she agreed to do. Then, she admits,

> *I got attached to the group. And three months later there was this big problem and people were beginning to leave Helem because [my friend] thought that he would actually make a living from that. So he was coordinating Helem, doing parties, and at the end of the party taking [the money collected] as a salary. […] I told him that maybe it was not the right way to do stuff. So we had this argument, and he said, "Oh, you can do better? I'm going to push you to be coordinator!" And I went, "No . . ." And then one day everyone elected me, and then it was like, "Okay, what do I do now?"*

In her new role, Nada expanded her vision of what was possible for her activism by attending international conferences, including an LGBT conference in Bulgaria, from which she developed her ideas to initiate an annual event focusing on REC allosexual issues that was eventually spun off into its own independent organization, Ethnoculture.

With no organizations targeting their particular needs, other narrators had to form their own. Alex's and Jean-Pierre's reasons were parochial, as they sought to stave off loneliness and isolation by respectively initiating groups through which they could meet others with similar intersectional identities. Jean-Pierre likens starting up GLAM to

"going back home," adding, "I wanted to speak to other Asians. I wanted to know if they were feeling the same thing as me. And also I wanted to help other Asians come out like I have."

Meanwhile, Alex, while attending university in Montreal, was informed by a classmate of the existence of another Black gay man in the city. Confessing to his classmate, "I feel alone. I feel that there is no one who is like me among Black people," Alex prodded him to set up a meeting on his behalf with this man. The classmate returned with a negative answer from the man, telling Alex, "He's not interested in you to know he's gay; but what you have to know is he is someone around you." This response struck a chord with Alex, who began to realize that the experience of being Black and gay in Montreal

> *must be completely different from [that of] White people, who have models, who have organizations, who have areas, who have different things that they can do together, that they can see people that are like them. I realize that we as Black, as gay, as sons of immigrants or immigrants ourselves, we have some more challenges than others. […] So all those elements made me realize that something has to come out of it, and that's how [Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique] started, and I took the lead of it—not because I was considering myself as the leader, but because I was feeling that there is a need to do something that can help some people. 'Cause for me, my first aim was I want to see black people who are gay.*

Alex's and Jean-Pierre's stories indicate that although the impetus for founding their groups had primarily been out of self-interest, they also saw it as a means of providing a service for the community.

In starting up Bispirituel, Diane and Their co-founders primarily wanted to combat homophobia in First Nations communities. All four organizers had long been out and were comfortable with their sexualities, to the extent that they were even involved in mainstream allosexual activism; however, they still saw the need for an organization

geared specifically towards Two-Spirited and allosexual Natives, and thus went ahead and took the initiative to establish one, though the process has not been easy as they thought it would be:

> *We decided it was time to start a group for Native people, thinking that it would go as well as other [gay and lesbian] organizations. The level of homophobia and the level of fear in Native communities is just too high. It still is; so it's difficult to start organizations specifically aimed at gay and lesbian rights in Native communities. There's more discussion now—people are talking about things more openly; yet the [gay and lesbian] population would not openly meet in a Native community still.*

While the majority of my narrators performed the bulk of their activism through organizations, Kanwar has steadfastly and unapologetically flown solo with his activist work. In his view, the appeal of operating alone lies in the flexibility it affords him, avoiding what he calls "scheduled activism." As an artist, everything he does is based on a feeling or impulse he experiences in a given moment; by working on his own, he is not beholden to the whims, needs, and desires of others, thereby permitting him to address numerous issues, includes allosexual concerns, as he sees fit.

As the foregoing narratives demonstrate, there is not one route that REC allosexuals take into social action. For some, such as Val, Ed, Diane, and me, it happened gradually; for others, such as Nada, Alex, and Jean-Pierre, it occurred more dramatically, by being thrust into it or by taking the initiative. Some have preferred their activism to be group-oriented, and some, such as Kanwar, have preferred to go out on their own. As the next section shows, the approaches my narrators adopt in their activism are just as varied as their respective entrées into social action.

Tactical Strategies

In her re-visioning of Michel de Certeau's (1984) bifurcation of tactics and strategies, Lugones (2003) dispenses with this dichotomy and, instead, opts to fuse them into one and create an entirely new mode of action—the "tactical strategy." Thus, whereas in de Certeau's (1984) view strategies are controlled and stable while tactics are fragmented and unpredictable (p. xix; see also Critical Art Ensemble, 2008; Jiwani, 2011), Lugones (2003) argues that there is an openness to tactical strategies that activates a space in which one finds "volume, intricacy, multiplicity of relationality and meaning" and "permits resistant, liberatory, enduring, if dispersed, complexity of connection" (p. 215). The utility of such a space, according to Lugones, is crystallized through an active subjectivity that is resolutely social, in that through the intentionality that exists between subjects in such a space (p. 217), "intersubjective encounters" (p. 219) become possible. By giving the active subject the freedom to roam and interact with other active subjects, this differentiated space, which Lugones calls a "hangout" (p. 220), empowers the tactical strategist to resist "interlocked and intermeshed oppressions" (p. 219) and defy "bounded territories" (p. 220). It is in this disidentificatory space that my narrators have become tactical strategists themselves in pursuit of their activist goals.

In this space, Diane has adopted a heteroglossic approach to Their activism, deploying not only words in the form of writing, but also Their body to speak Their truth and pass on Their message to those who need to receive it:

> *The biggest strategy that I think has had the most impact is probably living my life the way it should be lived; just by example, it has—especially in terms of the gay and lesbian lifestyle—had a lot of impact on other individuals, without my having to say anything or do anything. So not going away, not being invisible. Making myself visible—but not visible in the chanting, yelling, and screaming and whatever—I didn't have to do that because my voice was loud enough just by*

> *being. On the Native front I think that's what's had the most impact. […] It's a very silent yet active way of making your point. Living out loud.*

The site where Diane "hangs out" is a source of resistant strength that They then share with others in a field of exchange. It is a site where being is action and relies on sociality through intersubjectivity to do its work.

Visibility is also key to Kanwar's activism. As a "visible minority," Kanwar argues that it is "important to be visible" because "[p]eople *see* you. […] It desensitizes people to who you are." Kanwar's visibility, therefore, is not about being provocative; it is a device signalling who he is as a person and where he stands in life. As a result, he feels he has a responsibility to interact with and help other Sikhs that might otherwise isolate themselves because of their sexuality. Sometimes he is able to see the fruits of such labour up close, as demonstrated in the following story of a show he did in California:

> *One of the organizers, he was gay, but he wasn't out; and he was also Punjabi, and he was also Sikh. I wasn't performing at the show to come out or to out anybody—that wasn't the purpose of the show. [...] But towards the end of this trip, I came out—obviously just very naturally [since] I was telling my story—and he consequently came out to me. And I feel like—I'm hoping—maybe it helped him a little bit knowing that he's not alone, because I felt like I was him several years ago.*

There is a certain kind of emotional resonance that is transformative and that can only materialize through social relations. Val refers to this transformative social power as "emotional activism":

> *I think emotional activism is a tool I've been using more and more, where I find that the people who most transformed me in the way that I feel about different groups of people and the people that I feel I've most transformed are people who I love and who love me, and that it is actually through relationship-building that we can move towards something new.*

The hangout to Val is an emotional space within which she builds relationships as a

tactical strategy towards achieving connection and mutual understanding.

> Ed hangs out in a similar emotional space in Their approach to activism:
>
> *I think a lot of activism that I try to do as well as being part of specific groups is activism through relationships—so the friendships that I form, the people that I speak with, the people that I listen [to] and support […] and I try to focus on people who are racialized, people who are indigenous, people who are queer.*

As Ed's thoughts suggest, perhaps in the conversations that are initiated and sustained in these transformative spaces lies the possibility of coalition building. Although coalition work, as stated earlier, is undeniably laborious and rejects any comparison to home, it is still nurtured in a social space that depends on emotion to forge bonds and transport the interlocutors into a new, dynamic space. In this sense, the hangout is perpetually creative; new tactical strategies are devised, new relationships are formed, and new subjectivities materialize. And for the activist-artist, new *oeuvres* come into being.

Activist-Art

Of my narrators, Kanwar, Nada, Ed, and V incorporate art into their social justice praxes, although to varying degrees. Nada primarily works with film, photography, and writing to broach and explore such issues as the treatment of Palestinian refugees and relations between Christians and Muslims in Lebanon, and the lives of lesbians from REC communities in Montreal. She views her projects as a means of presenting a counter-narrative to the stories about and images of minoritized peoples that the public usually receives through the sensationalism of mainstream media, which Nada finds not only deceiving, but also dehumanizing. Her approach to her work is therefore grounded in the lived citizenship of people whose (his)stories are often ignored, overlooked, erased, or forgotten.

For Nada, art is one mechanism she employs to combat the mainstream media's depictions of oppressed people, which have become calcified "truths," and to draw attention to other realities that disrupt this normativizing power. So strong is her passion for telling these stories that she sees her art and politics as inseparable as well as personal. Offering her film work on the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon as an example, Nada says that as a woman with a Catholic background and, thus, linked to the Lebanese Christian community, she feels indirectly responsible for the massacre of Palestinian refugees by Lebanese Christians in 1982; consequently, she ventures into the camps to meet refugees face-to-face and to listen to and record their stories, "breaking apart" her own prejudices in the process. It is for these reasons that Nada expresses discomfort with the notion that her work is projecting her voice or her perspective; she prefers that the work speak for itself:

> *What's important for me is the message, not the name behind the message. I don't care if they put that the director was me or if I wrote the film or whatever. […] Maybe this will qualify as something made by me; I don't know. But I just don't like the huge titles. For me, what's really important is the document I'm making.*

What impels Nada in her audio-visual work is not ego or guilt by association, but a desire to expose the hypocrisy she sees in the world. However, as personal as these projects are to her sense of values and social justice, in her eyes they do not represent her voice, but rather those of her subjects. She admits that she has been less successful in conveying her own story visually or aurally because film, video, and radio are, in her opinion, "political," not "emotional" forms of media. Writing is the only mode through which she is able to express her sense of self autobiographically because it provides her with the space to be emotional. It is important to remember that she is still evolving as an artist, though:

> *I think I'm more and more realizing who I am and what are my identities, and it shows in my work. […] I cannot say that I reached what I want to reach. I still have a lot to learn and a lot to do, and I'm willing to do that. Today I have a different eye, a different perspective in my work, in my art. When I started doing movies and photography, I just did it to do it. I just did it because I loved doing it. There was no thinking behind it. Today I want to pass a message, and I know that I have the basics and all the technical stuff, and what I'm working on today is my subject. It's [about] how to reach as much people as I can, to get them to feel what I'm doing and all that. So this is two levels.*

Whereas earlier Nada structured the political and the emotional as distinct and discrete elements in art-making, here she seems to suggest that she is seeking to strike a balance between emotionality and criticality in her creative work. Her disidentities are becoming more entangled in her artistry; therefore, any messages she passes on through her projects will inevitably contain traces of her emotional investment in them.

In comparison to Nada, Kanwar is more willing to embrace the fusion of emotion and politics in his music. Current events frequently serve as a catalyst for his work; for example, in 2009, he wrote a poem to mark the 25th anniversary of the Golden Temple massacre. More often than not, though, his creative output will result in a song, usually in the hip hop genre. This is not to be fashionable or popular; Kanwar comes by his hip hop roots honestly, though syncretically:

> *Growing up [as] a visible minority—quite frankly marginalized—you tend to identify with a music that is of a people who promote solidarity. And back in the day, hip hop, reggae—these art forms were all about solidarity, and that's what was very attractive about it. So it was quite natural for me to map my cultural heritage onto such musical art forms. Musically speaking, folk music of Punjab is very similar to hip hop, so my gurus were poets, as well. It was a natural extension of myself, being of marginalized background and having a heritage that was so similar to people who exhibited solidarity.*

The syncretism of Kanwar's artistry is represented not only in his music, but in his stage name, as well:

> *I was really into [hip hop group The] Wu Tang [Clan], and they all had crazy*

> *names from the Five Percent Nation—influenced by Five Percenters—and the Nation of Islam and stuff. So they all used words like "wisdom," "God," "knowledge"—stuff like that. And I was always a sharp kid growing up—good in school, good at ball—and so Grade Ten, coming home from a basketball game, one of my friends goes, "Yo, you're name should be, like, Sikh Knowledge." Right? Because it was like a double-triple-quadruple entendre: "Sick" Knowledge, "Seek" Knowledge, all the in-betweens. That was a very Wu Tang-y sounding name.*

While Kanwar's musical style has developed organically, the mixing of politics with his art is agentic—a conscious decision on his part not only to make his music relevant and substantive in an apathetic and materialist society, but also to stay true to his Sikh heritage, the tenets of which stipulate, according to Kanwar, that its adherents fight "for the oppressed peoples of the world." In fact, to a certain degree it is his politics that define his work, since they are "naturally" intertwined. While he may dabble with other themes, his impulse will always be to turn towards the political, he says: "I think that if I write a love song tomorrow, fine, I'll write a love song; but the next six will probably be political."

Ultimately, Kanwar's politics have been historicized in his body, and so, hence, hold a great deal of meaning for him. That history is then transposed into his music, which literally becomes a symphony of his being, body and soul:

> *You make a beat out of your whole life—this is the nature of being a producer. You're not making a beat intermittently; you're orchestrating your whole life. So when I arrive, maybe the way I said something or the influences that I've had are so stark in the rhyme, you could see it, and that's my story.*

Kanwar cannot be anything but the artist he is since he would feel utterly out of place otherwise. To compromise is to be a slave to capitalism, he believes, and so because "capitalism doesn't sit well with" him, he stays firmly anchored to the integrity of his artistic vision. Indeed, holding fast to his vision is likely what has enabled him to

gain an international following. Despite his popularity as Sikh Knowledge, however, Kanwar does not view himself as a career artist. Instead, he has opted to earn a degree in speech language pathology and help children from minoritized backgrounds, in particular, with communicative impediments. His art is something he will continue to do purely for the love of it and for its capacity as a performative medium to vocalize his politics.

Like Kanwar, Ed and V are not careerists with their art, but link it to their politics through their own work and through work they do with in collaboration with the REC allosexual community through Ste Emilie Skillshare. Ed, who documented Their coming out experience in a short film that is featured on the DVD for Korean-American comedienne Margaret Cho’s concert film *Assassin*, sees something powerful and affirming in sharing personal stories with an audience through activist-art, since “it really solidifies this idea that you are not alone in the world and that your ideas, your thoughts, are connected to other people.” For those suffering through oppression, art has a certain capacity to aid in the healing process. Viewed thusly, art also then becomes indispensable to activism, which, Ed suggests, is often missing that healing component. Hence, activist-art performs an ethic of care (Collins, 2000/2009), revitalizing extant forms of social action by nourishing more hangouts for new social relations to develop. What makes activist-art effective in this regard is its accessibility; according to V, activist-art “should be accessible to the masses, [so] that people listen to it and be like, ‘Oh! I didn’t see this like that!’ And it shouldn’t be aggressive.” This does not mean that art should not be subversive or daring; but it should not be alienating or unrecognizable, either. Without accessibility in activist-art, the message(s) contained therein will either

be lost or not heard at all.

No matter what style, genre, or medium, activist-art is a tactical strategy with limitless potential in drawing the attention of people who may not ordinarily be reached through traditional channels. With mainstream media controlled primarily by corporate interests, activists increasingly need to be innovative in their approach to ensuring that their messages are seen and heard. Those few who manage to tap into their own creative talents are often among the most successful at accomplishing this feat, as sharing stories through art has the power to resonate emotionally with the public.

Community

A number of narrators articulated their rather complex relationships as activists with the various communities with which they claim some sense of identity. Ed sees a symbiotic connection between activism and community, asserting that the participation of communities, especially marginalized ones, is a critical element to doing activism. Consequently, activists must ensure that space is made available “for people [from those communities] to speak about their own experiences and for-self representation [and] self-determination.”

Nada, like Ed, understands the importance of collaborating and exchanging knowledge with communities, citing her experiences with Coalition MultiMundo and Ethnoculture as examples of community activism done right:

> *To me, community was something like MultiMundo. This was community for me: working all together to do something—to do an activity, a something. Ethnoculture is community, working in [a] different, diverse group, trying to build something together, but on the same level. […] I don’t care who did what. What’s important is what’s done and how it’s done.*

Despite the positive visions these narrators have of community as a site of social action, there are certain factors that trouble their visions. In allosexual communities, Val takes issue with the Whiteness of some organizations, which has brought her both anger and sadness. At the sexual assault centre where she volunteered, however, she used those emotions to cast a spotlight on its culture of Whiteness and, in the process, instigate change:

> *I've made a lot of people [the centre] feel really uncomfortable, and I've had a lot of really intense conversations with people, and also I had enough years in the organization that […] people gave me a certain respect. So when I questioned the anti-racism and when I expressed my displeasure with [the centre's] lack of awareness around anti-racism, I got taken seriously. But not every queer organization has those people who are as shameless as I am about making other people feel uncomfortable, because sometimes I just don't give a shit because I'm so angry.*

Nada, who has, until recently, taken her approach to community very seriously, has been bitterly disappointed and emotionally exhausted by the in-fighting she has witnessed and the betrayal she has experienced in her activist life, especially in Helem:

> *It's so bad when you don't know who loves you or who hates you. […] How do you want to build the community with that? Ask other people around us; people don't know who are their friends and who are their enemies. Because friends do stuff, you would be disgust[ed]. Like the problem that happened with Helem; I thought the coordinator was a friend, and he did the most horrible thing, for me, that happened in my life, and why? For nothing.*

Nada feels that the only way that different communities can move forward is if they learn how to value all of their members as potential activists who have something to contribute to the collective cause rather than relying on, privileging, and feeding the egos of a few self-proclaimed representatives of those communities to determine the directions they should take. One major problem that obstructs communities, she finds, is that too many of them practice excessive navel gazing instead of supporting each other

and exchanging knowledge:

> *I would cut my two hands that people from Fondation Emergence don't know anything about cultural communities because they never got any exchange. They don't meet. People don't do any activities together. Any. Even Ethnoculture, that's a great event; [but] how many LGBT White people come in that we don't know? We know the 5, 6, 7, 10 whatever that comes always to the event. And the others? They don't come. How many heterosexual people come in? I can count them on my two hands. There's no exchange; people are not in the community to exchange. People are in the community to . . . I don't know what. Everyone has their reason, but I think that this is not a community. This is "You come, you take in, and you leave," and that's it.*

The foregoing opinions reflect the often conflictual and contradictory nature of doing community work. To a certain degree, my narrators would not be activists without communities to be activists for; yet, these communities often produce unexpected pain and heartache for these activists, leaving them to wonder why they bother at all with contributing their time and energy to helping the collectivities to which they belong. The resultant sadness and anger some activists experience in this regard challenge them in their everyday lives. These are not the only challenges they face, however.

Challenges

As activists, my narrators describe the challenges to performing activism as originating from three locations: external, internal, and personal. Among the external challenges, securing funding for projects and day-to-day organizing has had the most significant impact on their work. Diane observes that a lack of access to funds—a direct result of the non-profit industrial complex detailed earlier—forces activists like Them to make hard choices:

> *[F]or a lot of us, we end up paying out of pocket. And then there's a point where you could say, "I can't afford to pay out of pocket anymore because I have other commitments"—you know, when the family comes along, right?*

In attempting to compensate for the paucity of funding available to their organizations, activists such as Diane risk draining their personal finances.

Moreover, time and energy may also be sacrificed, which is especially true for those who work as unpaid volunteers for these organizations. Val points out that many REC allosexual activists "are struggling to survive [because they] have less financial possibilities in life," yet some community organizations still expect them to carry all the work on their shoulders. V agrees with Val, stating,

> *[I]f you don't have a permanent staff, people are really tired from their work and the lack of budget and the lack of financial support; it's stressful, and you usually have to run on really tight deadlines.*

Securing a physical space to hold activities is another issue with which my narrators have to contend. Jean-Pierre shares that finding a place to hold GLAM's meetings proved rather difficult in the early years of the group:

> *I had to ask [the Centre communautaire gai et lesbienne for] permission to have a space to meet. That was not easy; but once I got a space, I used it. But every time, it was a struggle to ask for a space for our specific needs because they only had one space, and they could not isolate the space for just one group.*

Ed avers that much of this disparity in acquiring resources among activist circles in Montreal can be traced to those who run the more successful organizations and control the purse strings—namely, privileged gay White men:

> *I think it is impossible to do queer organizing without encountering gay White men who are middle-upper class who hold a lot of cultural and social power within organizations, within institutions, within the state. And so if you're talking about competing for resources or wanting to access resources and material things like funding, gay White men act and serve as gatekeepers of resources, power, decision-making power; and even when you're working with queer racialized groups, at some point in the process somebody who is a gay White male [and] who is middle-upper class is going to have power, and you will have to as a group or as individuals engage with that person because they hold all the cards.*

While Nada also sees the value of having ready access to material resources, she, like Andrea Smith (2007), disagrees with the emphasis on them as a necessity to doing activist work:

> *I believe that when we have a fight to do, whether we have money or not, we have to do it. […] Yes, funding helps, that's for sure. But funding shouldn't be the only issue. I think that if I really want to fight, I have to give everything I have and invest; and even if I end up having no money, I think that the most important thing is the way you're doing it. It's not the result, but the way it's done. [...] If you wait for funding, you'll never do anything.*

For Nada, it is the internal challenges than have been more troublesome to her than external ones. Zaafaran, for example, has been unable to sustain itself because no one in the group other than Nada, who is no longer its coordinator, has bothered to put any work into the organization:

> *Yesterday, I asked someone from Zaafaran if stuff were going on, and she said, "It was going on until the last party, and now it's dying." And I'm like, "Why?" There's a lot of things to do and all that. But there's no one; no one wants to put [on] something—even an hour or two or three—in the group, which is too bad.*

Diane says that keeping Their organization running has been more a matter of retaining committed volunteers than apathy among those that stay, which inevitably affects the ability to raised funds:

> *Most of the time what happens is there's this constant turnaround, and so the consistency is lacking. The best groups that work are those that have those consistent individuals from the beginning and who are able to provide the continuity and stability for the group, which is essential if you're trying to get funding.*

Attracting particular kinds of volunteers is another a problem for some narrators. For example, in spite of "Lesbian" being represented in GLAM's name, Jean-Pierre mentions that he had little success in drawing women to become involved in the organization. In fact, he noticed that there was a lack of women in attendance at

meetings for many allosexual organizations. Jean-Pierre ventures that the women likely had differing perspectives on how to run these organizations and, thus, needed a space of their own to meet their own needs and goals:

> *[The women] were more political. They wanted action—a lot of action. And I guess a lot of people didn't want that, so maybe they didn't feel that people were jumping into the bandwagon. […] I was open to [having more women involved in GLAM] because what's the use to have the name GLAM and have "Lesbian" in it if you don't have any?*

The divisiveness that frequently accompanies identity politics is thrown into even sharper relief when examined in the context of the broader allosexual movement. Kanwar, for instance, is often mistaken for Muslim by White allosexual activists and, thus, must endure all the animosity that comes with such a label, which, as seen in the work on homonationalism referred to earlier, presumes the irreconcilability of allosexuality with Islam. In Their activism, Diane has encountered more "benevolent" forms of racism, including being seen as a perpetual victim by those who condescendingly want to help "the poor Indian" and receiving requests from non-Natives who want to learn about and/or partake in traditional ceremonies without taking the time to understand their sacred purpose. Diane likens this latter form of racism to a form of cultural appropriation, saying:

> *I think with time I've become far more protective of [my culture] rather than just woodenly saying "yes" to people and try to teach them more about things. It's more along the lines of, "Don't rob us of this, as well. This is something that is special to our culture and should be observed."*

For Diane, the racism They experience in their activism is compounded further by non-Native activists ignorance or misapprehension of Two-Spiritedness, as their experience with La Table de concertation des gais et des lesbiennes[46] attests.

[46] The former name of the CQGL.

> *On La Table, there was discussion about that because we were trying to refine the policies in terms of who would actually sit and how it would work in terms of balancing between the male and female communities, and that was my opportunity to say, "I have an issue with that. Why are we saying that there has to be so many women and so many men sitting on this?" "Well, it's to make sure we represent." "Well, as a Two-Spirited person who doesn't fall in as a woman or a man, where am I?" […] Most people maintain their notion of Two-Spiritedness as being gay-lesbian Native.*

Ed believes that part of the reason for this kind of racism is the lack of self-reflection on the part of many White activists who ignore their own privileged status and, hence, their complicity in oppression. Anarchists are singled out by Ed as being among the worst offenders in this regard:

> *I've been to the Anarchist Bookfair, and I think it's an amazing space, but let's not kid ourselves—it's a White space. So you can talk about being oppositional and anti-capitalist, but you're reproducing White supremacy by doing that, and there are reasons for why people of colour are not in or do not participate in the Anarchist Bookfair […]. And so you're still a part of these [racist] structures.*

Ed's perspective underscores a major dilemma that is prevalent in many social movements—a dilemma that Richard J. F. Day (2005) terms "the *hegemony of hegemony*," which "refer[s] to the assumption that effective social change can only be achieved simultaneously and *en masse*, across an entire national or supranational space" (author's emphasis) (p. 8). Such an assumption positions experiences of oppression as universal and, thus, representable by "leaders" of social movements, who tend to be White men from privileged upbringings. The activism that is produced from and operationalized through this assumption creates an environment that has unhealthy consequences for, for example, REC allosexuals who become further marginalized by those who claim to be looking after their interests.

Val has witnessed some of the damage this "hegemony of hegemony" causes many REC allosexual activists in comparison to their White counterparts:

> *There's something about the number of emotional breakdowns and shutdowns I see in QPOC[47] communities that I just don't see as much in the White queer community, which seems to be directly linked to a lack of cultural resources, in the sense that we don't necessarily identify with the dominant mainstream culture […]. And the consequences of that is that sometimes emotionally or socially engaging with each other is taxing in a way that you don't want a social engagement to be, and that maybe actually impedes us from hanging out with each other and having all these lovely, more regular social engagements […] that I want so much.*

Val also feels, however, that REC allosexual activists can become so caught up in their rage in reaction to this marginalization that they "oversimplify" the articulation of their emotions in such a way that "White" is treated as a category to be absolutely maligned, posing a dilemma for mixed-race activists such as her.

> *[W]e so often end up with simplistic critiques about [our problems as] being "Whitey's" fault or just overly simplified ways of thinking about these issues that shut down potential allies or avenues for collaboration that would be really interesting to explore, and that are also uncomfortable for someone like me who has a White parent and who is half-White and who lives a life with White people in it and who loves a community that has White people in it. I see where the rage comes from, and that's why I never want to shut it down, but I also feel like it is so limiting, and it shoots us in the foot often in the end.*

According to Val, REC allosexual activists do themselves a disservice when they do not think through and focus their rage in such a way that its complexities and intricacies do not become apparent. Their blindness to the bigger picture sometimes may result in the emergence of intra-group tensions and conflicts, which can affect certain activists personally to the extent that they burn out emotionally, especially with all the other issues bombarding them.

Nada's terrible experience with Helem is a case in point. Members of a community group, she says, will often have tunnel vision with respect to their cause, thereby blinding them to the pain and hurt they are causing to other to others around,

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[47] Queer people of colour

and this describes her situation at the end of her coordinatorship with Helem:

> *You meet other people that just try to push you down, and that you're a woman and "Guys won't you listen?", and that you're a community group in the middle of a small community of White people . . . and it was all this and it was very hard. So I think it was steps; each step it will add on something until one day it blew. And of course, the biggest thing happened when Helem really tried to destroy me. And I couldn't take it because for me the group was [my] baby. […] Shit happens. But it's a group that was close. Really close. It was my family finally. It was horrible.*

As Nada's narrative demonstrates, emotions can work against us as much as they can work for us in activist work. The emotional investment that activists like Nada make in working with others, especially in organizational work, can lead to burnout if the former do not have the proper support system in place to help them deal with the stress that is part and parcel of activism. Thus, for the sake of their own psychological well-being, it is important that activists be able to identify the sources of pleasure as much as of rage in doing activism.

Pleasure

As activists, my narrators take their work very seriously. However, they are also able to articulate the personal rewards and pleasures in doing activism. Therese Quinn and Erica Meiners (2009) insist that as a social and humane endeavour, activism must be experienced as a site of pleasure and joy; if it is not, it becomes "unsustainable and also unattractive" (p. 105). Quinn and Meiners also stress the positive impact of sharing one's activism with people in their lives and, hence, bridging the gap between the public and private spheres, which, when separated, isolate and stigmatize those deemed "perverse, different, and abnormal" (p. 105). In all its pleasurable sociality, activism serves as the hangout for a broad spectrum of people to break down the walls between

them and make difference intelligible and embraceable.

For V, this pleasure becomes evident when he organizes, hosts, and attends activist events:

> *I love when I throw my events or when I see other people's events coming together and people having a good time and just soaking up the experience and they're just in the moment. […] I love seeing people having fun, connecting with others, sucking up face. This is rewarding to me because it's really rare as human beings [when] we can be in the moment—like, being there and don't care about the past or the future.*

The value of this sociality for Val is in the way it helps her survive her activism by raising her up when she is down and in despair. The solidarity she lives and experiences with others in those moments of social connection is to her "a really powerful and reassuring feeling." The pleasure Val takes in doing activism, therefore, is inextricable from her relationship with community:

> *I always say to people, "You can get me to do so many fucking things for you if you just get me to love you and make me feel like I'm part of your community." […] Knowing that you have a place to go where you can do something, where, no, it won't transform the entire society that we live in, [or] no, we'll never get to an anti-oppressive society in my lifetime, but to know that you can move a millimetre toward that with this group, perhaps . . . that is a lifeline.*

In their activist work, Jean-Pierre and Ed take pleasure in bearing witness to the transformation of the marginalized to the empowered resulting from such simple acts as, respectively, coming out or relaying personal narratives through art. Diane, meanwhile, treasures the changes that They has been privileged to see and contribute to as an activist over the years and how those changes have allowed Their children to grow up in a more accepting society:

> *My kids talk openly about people who are gay, lesbian, possibly bisexual in their classes or living their lifestyle, and there's no fear of talking about that. […] When I sit with [my friend] now and we see what's happened just in a very short period of time in terms of rights, in terms of recognition, and we go, "And there's*

> *just this little piece left now." Right? […] And to know that you were a part of it, that some of the stuff I participated in or did had an effect in passing some of those laws, makes me feel pretty good.*

Similarly to Diane, Alex discusses his pleasure in terms of the pride he takes in contributing to REC allosexual community organizing in Montreal by founding and sustaining Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique for many years, defying his skeptics in the process:

> *When I started [Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique], I remember I was discussing with some White leaders of LGBT organizations who said, "We know—you will start, and after one year you will just close your door"; and five years after they will see that we are still there. We are trying, we are persevering.*

From Kanwar's perspective, the pleasure he experiences from doing activist work is intermeshed with a certain tenet of Sikh philosophy that he follows calls *seva*:

> *[S]eva is basically like community service. So I always felt very good about the concept of seva—serving the community, working for the people; I always liked this idea. So I feel like, if anything I do is a type of seva, then I'm cool with it.*

Positive emotions, including pleasure, joy, and pride, are an integral part of REC allosexual activism, as the narratives above suggest. They help add meaning to the work being done, and stave off burnouts and breakdowns in more intense moments. In effect, they become a way of caring for the self and others as an act of love—a love that works in concert with rage to build and sustain movements. Indeed, for some of my narrators, the emotional cannot be divorced from the philosophical in their approaches to social action.

Philosophies

Among my narrators, Val is probably the one most driven by feelings in her activism, especially given the thought she has put into her conceptualization of emotional activism. In discussing what motivates her as an activist, she says,

> *I think it's a mix between rage and love. I see my parents everywhere in the people that I'm fighting for, and my anger at the injustices that dominated or subordinated or oppressed peoples experience is what gives me the rage to keep going.*

Another emotion that is key to Val's approach to her activism is compassion for humanity, which she thinks particularly

> *gets lost in university activism because it's so absolute and it's so about abstract thought that we forget that we're humans and we're fallible and we're shitty.*

Val's emphasis on compassion has been influenced heavily by Buddhist thought, which has helped her realize that all humans, even privileged ones, suffer and therefore are deserving of compassion, signalling a spiritual turn that she has taken in her activism.

Diane, too, expresses her approach to activism in terms of the spiritual energy that she considers to be inherent in all people:

> *I truly believe in the spiralling nature of everyone's energy; our lives are circular, and within that circle are many concentric circles that the momentum continues based on the events and the experiences that we have. […] [T]his constant circular movement means that whatever energy that I put out also affects anything within the circumference, and within there you have all other individuals who are in their own spirals, which means that my energy can either add to theirs or take away from theirs. So it's a natural force, I think, of my energy.*

To Kanwar, engaging in activism is not so much a matter of attuning oneself to other people's energies as it is feeling a connection with the injustices they face:

> *I'm very fortunate because a lot of the shit that goes on, I can relate to. I can relate to the causes of the Palestinian people because we have similar heritages in the sense that there's an invading force often, you know? […] I can identify with many gay struggles, obviously. […] You end up knowing the people that make noise, and that's where I am right now—having the proper outlets, identifying with those issues and causes, and having skills and talents to lend to the cause.*

Kanwar's approach to activism leans somewhat more towards the parochial; if a specific oppression mirrors in some way what is going on in his own life, then he will more

readily contribute to advancing the cause.

As with Kanwar, V also looks at his activism as a personal concern, though his perspective is concerned more with the desire to change his own circumstances than aligning himself with a specific cause:

> *If I cannot fight for my own rights, who will? Who will fight for me? […] It's really important; [that] you should be the change you wish to see in the world. […] You should not sit on your ass and bitch about the world and how the world is bad. If the world is so bad, do something about it! The door is there—you just go down the stairs, then you go on the street and you turn the corner, and I'm sure you can do something about the world. […] This is what keeps me motivated because I feel like I'm blessed with health, with having all my organs, my two feet, my two arms, so I have my privilege, so that's what I should do.*

While varied, the philosophies that undergird my narrators' approaches to their activism are linked by one common characteristic—they all reference the awareness these activists have of their positionality in relation to others; in turn, my narrators animate this knowledge in ways that suit their skills and world views. In effect, they disidentify with the linear thinking that dictates how one should be an activist and what issues one should take up. They do not concern themselves with the legitimacy or credibility of their respective paths into activism; rather, they understand that activism is social and relational, and not only apply this understanding to their respective praxes, but transform it into a kind of praxis itself.

If we, as activists, think of our self-awareness as having the potential to evolve into praxis, then we expand our opportunities for coalition building through what Lugones (2003) calls "world-traveling." According to Lugones, a "world" is a site of experience and memory that we inhabit in the here and now. It may be populated by a few or many other subjects (p. 88). We may also inhabit other worlds—each different from the other—and often simultaneously (pp. 88-89); however, each time we "travel"

to a different world, we ourselves are different in that world. Travelling marks the shift from being one person in one world to being a different person in a different world (p. 89). In our encounters with others as we travel to and from and between different worlds, "we can understand *what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes*" (author's emphasis) (p. 97). In our travels, then, we become "fully subjects to each other" (p. 97), imbuing ourselves with a knowledge that catalyzes our love for each other as subjects and that empowers us to resist isolation and alienation in the work that we do by un-fixing the sameness that threatens to stultify, to limit, to exclude. It is through our travels that we come to know and relate to each other in our difference, and make visible the power of those outside the mainstream who are ordinarily perceived as powerless and malleable (p. 97). Consequently, our travels enable us to create the hangouts wherein we may witness the intersecting of our positionalities and, in turn, begin and do the hard work of building coalition—a "deep coalition" (p. 98) founded on difference, mutual awareness, and love emanating from what Anzaldúa (2002) calls *conocimiento*, a consciousness we all carry within us, waiting to be discovered so that we may harness its creative, sensual, spiritual, and epistemological energy for our struggles against marginalization, oppression, and domination.

My narrators and I, we travel between worlds all the time, hanging out and sharing our histories and experiences as well as building and rebuilding coalitions. As REC allosexuals, we grasp the sociality and relationality of our activisms, though we do not always necessarily succeed at sustaining them. Yet in spite of our failures (and because of our successes), we continue travelling and continue doing our activisms with all the rage, love, and every other emotion in-between that we can muster to effect

whatever social change we can.

The stories we not only tell, but also live, capture our journeys as activists in this regard. Some of us began our journey at a very young age, as Kanwar did, while some, such as Jean-Pierre, started later in life. The forms our activisms took at the outset represent a broad range of tactical strategies, from the demonstrations in which Kanwar participated, to fundraising by Nada, to Ed's defiance of ontological norms, to the establishment of REC allosexual organizations by Jean-Pierre and Alex, influencing our respective definitions of what activism is and who activists are. Over time, most of us assumed leadership positions with different groups, many of them focused on REC allosexual issues that also, of course, affected us personally. A number of us, particularly Kanwar, Nada, and V, have turned to creative expression through different artistic practices as a means of engaging with social justice concerns. Whatever approaches we have taken, interacting with and involvement in various communities have always been central and necessary to our activist work. During the course of our work, we have encountered numerous challenges, most notably the economic fallout from neoliberal government policies, interpersonal conflicts, and systemic intersectional and institutional discrimination perpetrated by those wielding hegemonic power as well as the concomitant physical, emotional, and psychological stress we have often experienced with all of these challenges. Despite these hindrances, we have still managed to find moments of pleasure in what we have done and continue to do: when we make new friends and hang out with old ones; when we see the events and projects we coordinate become successful; when we witness marginalized individuals speaking out, being heard, and transforming themselves; and when we discover that we, too, have been

transformed. In all our organizing and art-making, we have tapped into our emotions to bring a sense of humanity to our work, building affective communities (Gandhi, 2006) along the way.

We are singular in our activisms; and through our singularities, we make disidentificatory spaces for ourselves—hangouts in which we can encounter, engage, and love other singularities. As REC allosexual activists in Montreal, we disidentify with the rules that govern the performance of activism. We disidentify through our identities-in-difference. We disidentify with the temporal rigidity of the past, present, and future.

Chapter Seven

The Past, the Present, and the Future – A Utopian Conclusion

> *For me, what makes "home" a desirable metaphor is the utopian prospect of building a community. Such interaction always involves a bit of insecurity and uncertainty. That, to me, is the joy of queer life*.
>
> Karin Aguilar-San Juan (1998, p. 29)

Towards the end of February 2012, I suffered another nervous breakdown. In hindsight, I probably knew in the back of my mind that this would happen sooner or later. A series of events that began with a very silly but intense fight I had with one of my sisters two Christmases earlier and ended with the dual pressures of meeting dissertation deadlines and continually increasing tensions with my then-roommate had worn me down emotionally and psychologically. Given the year that I had, anyone who knew me and my lifelong battle with clinical depression could probably have guessed that everything I had endured would inevitably result in my mental collapse.

It began gradually; first with a few cryptic quotations on Facebook from some well-known songs. I stopped taking the anti-depressants I had been on for close to a decade and started sleeping for sixteen hours at a time, spending my waking hours posting music videos of songs with rather dark lyrics. Calls would come in from my father with increasing frequency, as I would never answer the phone, so he naturally grew concerned. Soon I withdrew from all forms of communication, including Facebook, on which my ubiquitous presence is legendary among those who know me. At the height of my breakdown, I was lying on my bed in my room with the lights off and curtains drawn, alternating between sobbing uncontrollably, cutting myself with a Swiss Army knife, and concocting elaborate schemes to kill myself, emerging from my room only to go to the bathroom and only when I was sure my roommate was either out or asleep so she would not see me.

In one of my more lucid moments, I decided I had to do something before I went ahead with one of my suicide plans, so I contacted a psychiatrist friend of mine and managed to secure an appointment with her immediately. I then called a REC allosexual activist friend—actually, at that time more of an acquaintance, as I did not want any of my close friends or family members to know what I was going through—and asked Them to accompany me to the appointment to ensure that I made it there. In the office of my psychiatrist friend, I did my best to explain to her what had been going on in my mind over the past month, and she told me I needed to check myself into the emergency ward of my hospital immediately. Thereafter, my acquaintance friend and I went to the hospital, where I was admitted on the spot.

For the next four days, I "convalesced" at the hospital, informing only a couple of other friends and a cousin that I was there. While the emergency ward was by no

means quiet, there were also no computers, telephones, roommates, or scholarly books and articles to stress me out, and so my stay there was actually quite tranquil, giving me some much needed rest from the chaos of my life. The friend who came with me to the hospital brought me some comic books by Alison Bechdel to help me pass the time, and I also received visits from another REC allosexual activist friend and my cousin, who became my contact person for the rest of the family.

After several meetings with the staff psychiatrists at the hospital and committing to regular appointments with one of them, I was allowed to check myself out and return home. The first thing I did when I walked in the door of my condo was to call my father. When he answered, I was barely able to utter "Hello" before he said, "Son, we love you and accept you. There are some things that can't be changed about us, and there are some things that you can't change about you. But we accept you, okay? We accept you."

I was surprised—so much so that I did not have a chance to tell my father before the call ended that my breakdown was not due to my parents' thoughts about my sexuality (though deep down inside, I suppose it had always been a major factor). Later, one of my sisters told me that when my parents had been informed that I was in the hospital, they drove to Mississauga Chinatown to escape the suffocating stillness of the family home. As they sat in the food court, cradling their cups of coffee, people they knew came up to them to say hello in the way people often do in public. Unaware of my situation, many of these friends and acquaintances of my parents proceeded to brag about their children—the positions they held, the education they received, the weddings they had, the grandchildren they bore. As they listened to these people prattle on and on, one after the other, about the successes of their offspring, it suddenly dawned on my parents that they could care less about the accomplishments of other people's kids. Who were these people anyway? They meant nothing to my mother and father. What mattered, they realized, was their own children—their health, their well-being, their happiness. And believing that their view of my sexuality had almost destroyed me convinced them to re-evaluate how they saw me and spoke to me—because, in the end, it was their own children that mattered, not those of others. Here, my parents performed their own form of disidentification, transforming themselves as an act of love.

* * *

REC allosexual activists in Montreal remember the past. They survive in the present. And they think of the future. Time for them, therefore, is performative; it is a doing of having been, being, and becoming that is embodied in their enactment of family, citizenship, and community organizing—spheres of social relations that are dominant presences in REC allosexual lives. In these spheres, which are so closely interlinked in REC allosexual existence, time is coterminous, in that yesterday, today, and tomorrow intersect in the performance of everyday life; at this intersection, a space is created

wherein time becomes dynamic, opening up opportunities for transformation of the self and relationships with others. By disidentifying with what José Esteban Muñoz (2009) calls “straight time” (p. 22), my REC allosexual narrators reject the empiricism of “History” in favour of a hermeneutic (see Muñoz, 2009; Taylor, 1977) that creates a critical consciousness from which memory is brought into the present and deployed as an epistemic tool for envisioning and constructing an ideal future—a “queer utopia,” in Muñoz’s (2009) words, steeped in hope to counter the negativity of antirelational and antisocial (Caserio, Edelman, Halberstam, Muñoz, & Dean, 2006) currents in White allosexual activism as well as the “gay pragmatism” that seeks acceptance into mainstream society by inculcating heteronormative practices and, through mimicry, reproducing them in the form of homonormativity and homonationalism. In this sense, queer utopia is aspirational; it is something to strive for, to map out by re-purposing useful knowledge from the past, to actualize and re-actualize through constant experimentation in the present day.

It is this imagining of utopia that has enabled my narrators to negotiate, shape, and define their conceptualizations of family in ways that follow neither normative nor even antinormative paths, but new and different routes, satisfying their desire for emotional connections in an ever-alienating society. It has enabled my narrators to experience citizenship as a lived quotidian event that provides them with multiple sites of belonging in and engagement with society, but on their own terms. It has enabled my narrators to discover, strategize, and deploy various acts of resistance against forces of domination by creating hangouts in which activists from similar and different worlds alike can meet and love each other so that they can begin the hard work of coalition

building. It has enabled my narrators to rejuvenate themselves and to continue to have hope and to live and be as they see fit. It has enabled them to transform themselves through disidentification in everyday life.

In drawing from their pasts to propel their visions of the future, my narrators reveal that their histories are sutured into their activisms. Jean-Pierre, Ed, and V use their personal experiences with oppression from earlier moments in their lives to motivate them and inform their practices in their organizational work. Val and Alex, meanwhile, have taken lessons learned through familial intra-relations as they were growing up and applied them to their methods of engaging socially with activists and non-activists alike in their everyday activism. And Nada says that her history is omnipresent in everything she does:

> *My own history is always with me; even now, I'm talking to you, it's here—in my emotions, in my work, in my activism, in my way of thinking.*

While their disidentificatory performances abnegate essentialized and essentializing identities, my narrators also interface with what Elizabeth Freeman (2000) has termed "temporal drag," which is "the genuine *past*-ness of the past" (emphasis in original) (p. 728), wherein the epistemologies of "collective political life" associated so closely with preceding generations of everyday activists await interpellation, ready to move across time when called into the present day to inform, but not determine, the repertoire of tactical strategies used in their organizing, mobilizing, and art-making (p. 729).

From familial to citizenly to activist histories, these REC allosexuals have a wealth of intersectional knowledge to tap into; however, as Kevin Kumashiro (2001) wisely reminds us, these intersections of knowledge must themselves be continually

“troubled,” for, as with any epistemology, there are always more stories to be told (p. 18; see also Erel, Haritaworn, Rodríguez, & Klesse, 2008). Indeed, as Andrea Smith (2011) asserts, queer theorists of colour, including Muñoz and Gayatri Gopinath, frequently recolonize First Nations peoples either by appropriating their symbols and philosophies to make a point that is unrelated to indigenous struggles of decolonization or by overlooking or neglecting their perspectives altogether, such as that of counteridentification with “the settler colonial state” (p. 56). Thus, it is incumbent upon REC allosexual activists to be mindful of the fact that the tools of resistance at their disposal, including disidentification, must always be analytically problematized so that these individuals do not become oppressors in their own right.

For my narrators, utopia is not merely a future ideal; they also live that utopia in the present—sometimes failing at it, but never forsaking the effort they put into creating a better life for themselves and the people and communities they love. The work is a process—always ongoing and never complete. Kanwar and Nada, for example, believe that there are still many stories inside them as well as out in the world that they wish to express through their art. Diane notes that even though They are aging, They feel that there is still much activist work to be done—if not with the younger generation, then certainly among people of Their own generation and older. For Ed, “bringing new people into social movement activism” is a constant priority, as there are always excluded voices that need to be heard, while Val sees community building as something that she will always be working towards in her life. Both V and Alex, meanwhile, see activism as innately teleogically-oriented, in that there will always be a bigger and better goal to aim for and, thus, give them cause to generate new ideas and have a sense of

purpose. Alex declares,

> *The sky's my limit. I really don't see any limit of my activism. Sometimes I try to be realistic, and at certain times I say, "Why should I put a limit on my activism?" [...] And I'm not afraid of risks that can come—I always say that. That's also based on the experiences that I had with the war and everything. I always know that there are so many people that I was studying with who died; and I saw so many people—strong people—dying. And I'm not afraid of dying. So that having been said, I'm not afraid of anything—and in putting a limit is having fear of something. I'll go as far as my capacities and my abilities will allow me.*

Through disidentification, REC allosexual activists disrupt the present by performing a future that bears traces of the past. By living their utopia today, they push disidentificatory practices beyond sites of representation and into the realm of everyday existence, wherein their rage, love, and every other emotion in-between, including hope, may be expressed and shared in a space that they can claim as their own.

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Appendix A: Sample Consent Form for Narrators

Consent form for Alan Wong's Oral History Ph.D. Dissertation Project

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN: ***Diversity/Adversity : Citizenship, Activism and Intersections of Gender, Sexuality, Race and Ethnicity in Montreal*** **(working title)**

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Mr. Alan Wong of the Special Individualized Program (PhD option) of Concordia University (tel: Email:)

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to collect and preserve the oral histories of activists in Montreal who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer or allosexual (LGBTTQA) ethnicized or racialized minorities/margin resistors, people of colour and/or aboriginals or Two-Spirited people, and that the interviews will be analyzed and used by the researcher for his dissertation. The researcher has made it clear that he hopes that this project will help to shed light on the main issues affecting the communities represented by such activists and the strategies used by them to combat oppression and discrimination facing these communities in day-to-day life.

B. PROCEDURES

The interviews for this research will be conducted at participants' homes, at Concordia University's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling (COHDS), at the researcher's home or at another appropriate site mutually agreed upon by both researcher and participant. The researcher will record participants' life stories using video or audio or in writing. Participants can choose to discuss any aspect of their lives and they may refuse to answer any question as well as discontinue the interview entirely at any time. Interviews normally take 2 hours, but participants may take as long as they like and are free to stop at any time. If necessary, more interviews will be conducted. The researcher intends to follow a philosophy of shared authority, whereby the participant will be treated as a collaborator in the research process through regular consultation on the use of the interviews and their content.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

There are various options with respect to confidentiality that are available to you below should you have concerns about the content of responses in the interviews. Still, there may be instances during the interview where you may be describing difficult experiences. As mentioned above, you are free to refuse to respond to any question and may stop or discontinue the interview at any time. A list of resources will be provided to you that you may consult should the need arise. In considering the possible benefits of participating in this project, you may want to contemplate how telling and archiving your story can be used as an additional tool in your activist work as well as a means of inspiring future generations of activists.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

__ I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences (although prior access cannot be changed), except after publication and/or dissemination of any work that has used my interview with my permission.

__ I understand that transcripts and/or recordings of my interview will be stored at the venues I have selected below and that the public will have access to them and may refer to them in future publications (as contingent upon the selections I have made)

In terms of **identification**, I agree to the following (please choose one):

__ **Open public access –** My identity may be revealed in any publications or presentations that may result from this interview.

__ **Limited Access –** Researchers using this interview may know my identity but will not disclose it or otherwise make it available to others; they will refer to me by a pseudonym.
__ **Anonymity –** My identity will be known only to the interviewer/principal investigator and any persons assisting with transcriptions and/or translations, should the need arise; others will not gain access to my identity unless they gain special permission from myself, the interviewee. All tapes and recordings will be destroyed.

In terms of **reproduction of my interview**, I agree to the following (please choose one):

__ I agree to the reproduction of sound and images from this interview by any method and in any media by the interviewer/principal investigator. I am aware that my decision regarding public access/anonymity will restrict and guide these reproductions.
__ I agree that while my interview may be accessed by researchers and the public (either through the audio or video or through a transcript, depending on the identification choice made above), no sound or images from it may be reproduced.
__ I do not agree to the reproduction of my interview other than for the purpose's of Alan Wong's dissertation

I agree to allow my interview to be **archived** at the following venues (please choose all that apply):

__ Concordia University's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling

__ Concordia University's Library and Archives

__ Quebec Gay Archives

__ Canadian Gay and Lesbian Archives (Toronto)

__ International Homo/Lesbian Informationcenter and Archives (The Netherlands)

__ Other (interviewee's choice) _____

__ I do not wish for my interview to be archived.

Further remarks: _____
_____ ___

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

INTERVIEWEE (please print): _____

SIGNATURE: _____ _____

INTERVIEWER: _____Alan Wong_____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____ _____

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Advisor, Concordia University, at or by email at .

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Project

Childhood:
Where and when were you born? What was your name at birth? What is the story behind your name? What is your earliest memory? Where did you grow up? What was your house like? What was your neighbourhood like? What kind of upbringing did you have? What were your friends like? How would you describe your home life? What kind of child were you? What kind of activities did you participate in? What did you do for fun? What did you want to be when you grew up? How did you view the world as a child? Who influenced you the most when you were a child? What was school like for you? What were your interests in school? What kind of friends did you have? What did school give you?

Family:
How far back does your knowledge of your family's history go? Where were your parents born? How did they meet? What did they do for a living? How big was your family? What kind of relationship did you have with your family? Describe your family life. What activities did your family engage in? What kind of discussions would you have with them? How did your family treat you? What kind of expectations did they have of you? How are things different now? What kind of challenges did you face as a family? What did you learn from your family? Who do you consider to be your family? How was your family's relationship with the community?

Work:
What kind of jobs have you had? What were you trained to do? What kind of experience were you looking for through your job? What role did work play in your life? What kinds of things did you observe in your work? What did you hope to accomplish through your work?

Culture, Community, and Identity
How do you define your culture? In what ways do you identify with it? What influence has it had on your life? What role has it played in your life? How would you describe your culture? With what community do you feel a sense of belonging? How does your sense of community relate to your sense of culture? How has your identification with your culture and your community changed and evolved over the years? How has race or ethnicity played into your ideas about culture? How have you viewed yourself racially or ethnically throughout your life? What challenges has your cultural identity brought you? When did you first feel like you were different culturally? What role has language played in your cultural identity?

Sexuality and Gender Identity
How would you define and describe your sexuality or gender identity? When did you first feel that you were different from the societal "norm" in terms of your sexual or gender identity? How did you deal with these feelings or ideas when they first arose? When did you come to accept this as a part of your life or identity? What challenges have you faced as a result of your sexuality or gender identity? How has your sexuality or gender identity affected your sense of belonging in society? What is the relationship between your sexuality or gender identity and your notions of community? How much

of an impact has your sexuality or gender identity had on your life? How would you describe the relationship between your sexuality or gender identity and your cultural identity?

Activism:
What kinds of issues have interested you throughout your life? When did you first develop some sort of political consciousness? When did you first become actively engaged in political and social issues? In what ways has your activism manifested itself throughout your life? What strategies have you used in your activism? What kind of reactions have you received from your family, your peers, and the wider community? What has motivated you politically, socially, and culturally to get involved in activism? How has political involvement shaped your life? What have you hoped to achieve through your activism? What challenges have you faced as an activist? What has been rewarding to you as an activist? How has your own history influenced your activism? How has your activism influenced your own history? What is the relationship between your activism and your identity? How do you view the relationship between activism and community?

Art (optional)
Tell us about the first time you bridged your artistic practice with your interest in community issues? How did you come to make this link? In what ways do you feel your artistic practice changed once you began to address community concerns? What kinds of stories did you express through your art when you first began your career as an artist? What was your first experience with the arts? What drew you to your particular métier? How did you develop your skill? What made you realize that this is something you wanted to pursue as a career? Who and/or what influenced your practice? Who and/or what inspires you as an artist? Why is art important to you? Why do you think is your art important? What kinds of messages have you tried to convey through your art? Who is your target audience? What has been their reaction or response to your work? Describe the first time you had a public audience for your work. What was this experience like for you? How did this influence your approach to your art thereafter? How do you view the relationship between art, politics, and history? What challenges have you faced as an artist? Why is art meaningful to you? How has your community responded to your art? What role do you think your art plays in your community? What are the connection between your art and your culture and community? What have been the key decisions and choices you have made in your artistic practice to convey your story or stories? What effect has conveying your own story through your art had on the way you convey or collaborate in the conveying of other people's stories? What has been your approach to relaying the stories of collective displacement through your art? What kind of impact has your activism had on your art?

Conclusion:
How do you think your activism affected or influenced the communities you've worked with? How do you think your activism has changed over the years? Where do you think your activism is heading? How do you ultimately identify yourself? Would you like to add anything else before we end the interview?

Appendix C: Resource List for Narrators

Gay Line (Montreal English LGBTQ Crisis Line) – 514-866-5090

Gay Online (Montreal English LGBTQ Online Crisis Service) – gayonline@caeoquebec.org

Gai Écoute (Montreal French LGBTA Crisis Line) – 514 866-0103

Queerline (English LGBTQ Crisis Line Based at McGill University) – 514-398-6822 (accessible 8 p.m. – 11 p.m., Mon-Sat)

McGill University Sexual Identity Centre/Le Centre d'orientation sexuelle de l'Université McGill (provides specialized mental health care in English, French and Spanish to individuals, couples and families with sexual orientation issues) – Confidential voice-mailbox: 514-934-1934, ext. 43585; Team secretary: 514-934-1934, ext. 42365

Appendix D: Interview Schedule

Alein (Audio)
- Session One: January 9, 2011
- Session Two: January 16, 2011

Alex (Audio)
- Session One: June 22, 2010
- Session Two: June 29, 2010

Amanda (Audio)
- Session One: July 18, 2010
- Session Two: July 26, 2010

Atif (Video)
- Session One: May 12, 2010
- Session Two: August 7, 2010

Arshad (Video)
- Session One: October 22, 2010
- Session Two: October 29, 2010

Benji (Audio)
- Session One: August 24, 2010
- Session Two: February 10, 2011

Billy Jack (Video)
- Session One: August 27, 2010
- Session Two: August 28, 2010
- Session Three: August 30, 2010

Chris (Audio)
- Session One: June 21, 2010
- Session Two: June 28, 2010

Clara (Audio)
- Session One: September 19, 2010
- Session Two: October 14, 2010

Claudy (Video)
- Session One: August 9, 2010

Degane (Audio)
- Session One: January 12, 2011
- Session Two: January 21, 2011

Diane (Video)
- Session One: January 14, 2011
- Session Two: January 21, 2011
- Session Three: February 1, 2011

Ed (Audio)
- Session One: July 9, 2010
- Session Two: August 23, 2010
- Session Three: November 17, 2010

Gaspare (Video)
- Session One: January 5, 2011
- Session Two: January 10, 2011

Hector (Video)
- Session One: March 4, 2011
- Session Two: March 29, 2011

Jean-Pierre (Video)
- Session One: November 24, 2010
- Session Two: February 11, 2011

Jeffrey (Audio)
- Session One: June 25, 2010

Joelle (Video)
- Session One: June 18, 2010
- Session Two: August 2, 2010

John (Audio)
- Session One: October 27, 2010

Jo (Audio)
- Session One: April 5, 2010
- Session Two: April 12, 2010

Josie (Audio)
- Session One: September 12, 2010
- Session Two: September 16, 2010
- Session Three: Ocotber 2, 2010

Kanwar (Video)
- Session One: July 15, 2010
- Session Two: January 28, 2010
- Session Three: March 30, 2010

Lance (Video)
- Session One: September 10, 2010
- Session Two: October 15, 2010

Larry (Audio)
- Session One: November 7, 2010
- Session Two: January 16, 2011

Laura (Video)
- Session One: November 26, 2010
- Session Two: December 9, 2010
- Session Three: December 15, 2010

Luis (Video)
- Session One: June 26, 2010
- Session Two: July 25, 2010

Michael (Video)
- Session One: February 4, 2011

Mona (Video)
- Session One: April 23, 2010
- Session Two: August 9, 2010

Nada (Video)
- Session One: June 3, 2009
- Session Two: June 10, 2009
- Session Three: July 3, 2009

Nathalie (Video)
- Session One: April 26, 2010
- Session Two: October 24, 2010

Rémy (Video)
- Session One: September 11, 2010
- Session Two: October 9, 2010

Renata (Video)
- Session One: May 2, 2010
- Session Two: July 16, 2010
- Session Three: March 6, 2010

Richard (Video)
- Session One: April 19, 2010
- Session Two: August 11, 2010

Riyas (Audio)
- Session One: April 17, 2010
- Session Two: June 5, 2010
- Session Three: July 11, 2010

S. M. (Audio)
- Session One: January 7, 2011
- Session Two: January 14, 2011

Sam (Audio)
- Session One: February 3, 2011
- Session Two: February 11, 2011
- Session Three: February 18, 2011

Sarah B. (Video)
- Session One: March 21, 2010
- Session Two: March 28, 2010

Steve (Audio)
- Session One: October 23, 2010
- Session Two: October 30, 2010

Stephanie (Video)
- Session One: May 1, 2010
- Session Two: July 12, 2010

Sue (Audio)
- Session One: August 8, 2010
- Session Two: September 1, 2010

Super Star (Audio)
- Session One: May 19, 2010
- Session Two: August 25, 2010

Tiago (Video)
- Session One: April 25, 2010
- Session Two: August 19, 2010

Tasha (Video)
- Session One: April 18, 2010
- Session Two: July 16, 2010

Ting (Audio)
- Session One: April 14, 2010
- Session Two: April 21, 2010

V (Audio)
- Session One: November 3, 2010
- Session Two: November 21, 2010

Val (Video)
- Session One: June 24, 2010
- Session Two: July 17, 2010
- Session Three: January 8, 2011

Vanessa (Video)
- Session One: June 27, 2010
- Session Two: July 19, 2010
- Session Three: October 16, 2010

Vincent (Audio)
- Session One: September 11, 2010
- Session Two: September 16, 2010
- Session Three: October 14, 2010

Wai-Yant (Video)
- Session One: May 14, 2010

Appendix E: Ethics Certificate[48]

UNIVERSITÉ Concordia UNIVERSITY

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant:	Dr. Yasmin Jiwani
Department:	Communication Studies
Agency:	N/A
Title of Project:	Diversity/Adversity: Citizenship, Activism and Intersections of Gender, Sexuality, Race and Ethnicity in Montreal
Certification Number:	UH2010-008
Valid From: 24 March 2010	to: 24 March 2011

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Dr. James Pfaus, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

01/29/2009

[48] As per Concordia University ethics policy, I applied for ethics approval through my supervisor, Dr. Yasmin Jiwani.